Thomas M. Robinson

Logos and Cosmos

Studies in Greek Philosophy

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To Kostas Boudouris
for two decades of friendship

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Introduction

This book, like its predecessor *Cosmos as Art Object*, consists of a number of previously published articles on topics in classical Greek philosophy which I thought merited being collected into a single volume. Included are three pieces which originally appeared in Japanese, Russian and Brazilian journals, and are published for the first time in English.

The volume sets out to be a collection of articles; in no way is it structured to be read straight through from A to Z, as though it comprised a continuous argument.

Each item is meant to be a self-standing short study, with the inevitable duplications that this entails; in all such instances it is my hope that the occasional repetition will be accepted as making sense in the context of what the article/paper in question was setting out to do, and of who its intended readership/audience was. (Some of the pieces originated as papers read to academic audiences, as a certain directness of address will occasionally indicate).

Because the works of more than one philosopher are in question, a roughly historical sequence of the time at which these philosophers were writing has been followed. Exceptions are articles devoted to the discussion of any given philosopher, which for convenience's sake I have grouped together.

With minor changes, all articles appear as originally published.

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Item (6) appears for the first time in English. It was originally published in Japanese in *Academic Proceedings of the St. Andrew's University Press*, Osaka, 1996, pp. 27–36; in Russian in *The Universe of Plato's Thought*, St. Petersburg University Press, 1997, pp. 49–63; and in Portuguese in the *Boletim do CPA*, Instituto de Filosofia e Ciências Humanas, Seto de Publicacões, Campinas, Brazil, 1997, pp. 23–29. It appears in English with the kind permission of the editors of the St. Andrew's University Press, Osaka.

Item (14), like item (6), also appears for the first time in English. It first saw the light of day as a lecture delivered in Italian at the Università degli Studi di Pisa, and is scheduled for publication in Volume 49 of *Studi Classici e Orientali* (Pisa). This English-language version of the original appears with the kind permission of the editors of the journal.

I should also like to take this opportunity to thank Anita di Giacomo for her stalwart work in reducing the various pieces in the volume to a common format, and Holger Drosdek, of Academia Verlag, for his excellent work on finalizing the text for printing.

T. M. Robinson,
Toronto, April 2008

1. Heraclitus, Plato, and Greek Poetry

In this paper I shall examine, from a particular point of view, the stance adopted by Heraclitus and Plato towards contemporary and antecedent Greek poetry (including drama). I shall argue in the first part that for both philosophers there existed a single, incontrovertible "account" *(logos)* of the real as a unity-amid-diversity, an account expressible in human terms *via* such *prophetai* as Heraclitus and Plato themselves, and mirroring, insofar as it could, the *logos* uttered by the real itself in its most rational guise. Poets, by contrast, (again including dramatists), are to be treated with caution to the degree that they utter *logoi* that *misdescribe* the real; and something more than caution is called for if they have further committed themselves to the sophistic, and specifically Protagorean premise, that there may be no objective reality amenable to univocal description. In the second part I shall suggest that the poets, the sophists and Socrates (though not Heraclitus or Plato) have more in common in their views on *poiesis* than is sometimes realized, and that those views continue to make excellent sense.

To begin with Heraclitus. In three famous fragments (1, 2, 50 DK) he talks of an "account" *(logos)* of things which "holds forever", of which (ordinary) people "prove forever uncomprehending, both before they have heard it and when once they have heard it". "All things", says Heraclitus, happen "in accordance with this account". Whose account is this? Minimally, that of Heraclitus himself; we have it from Aristotle (and later Sextus Empiricus) that fr. 1 came from the beginning of Heraclitus' book, and it was standard for Ionian prose-authors to refer at the outset to the "account" of things they would be putting forth in their book. Heraclitus' *logos* is a precise one: he "distinguish(es) each thing according to [its] real constitution, i.e., points out how it *is*". The account he offers is also, he says, "common" or "universal". The word is suggestive, hinting that the "account" is not just true at all times (a claim he has already made) but universal in its application. If the latter is true, it looks as though "law" might be a better translation than "account", and this is in fact the translation adopted by Marcovich.

A natural question any Greek would have posed at this juncture is: who/what is the ground of this universal "law" or "account"? Zeus perhaps? In a sense, Yes, replies Heraclitus; but it is more precisely describable as that "one thing, the only wise thing", that "is not and is willing to be called by the name Zeus" (32) and is "set apart from all" (108). This wise thing *(sophon)* it is that utters, *ab aeterno,* the *logos* (or complex of *logoi),* mirrored in the words of Heraclitus and other such *cognoscenti,* which both descriptively announces that "all things are one" (50), prescriptively enunciates that "divine" Law which underpins all human law (114), and ensures on pain of punishment (94) that "measured" change-amidst-stability which constitutes the real (31).

Most people fail to recognize in their precise articulations (fr. 1) the detail and structure of the laws of nature and conduct uttered by *to sophon*, says Heraclitus, including some of Greece's most distinguished poets. Elementary facts about the real, such as the unity of day and night, Hesiod, for example, failed to recognize, and in so doing misled a great number of people (57, 106). Homer, too, for all his wisdom, could get things wrong (56). The results of such ignorance are particularly pernicious in the case of poets, since they are in fact the teachers of large numbers of Greeks (57); so much so that, if Heraclitus had had his way, Homer would have been "ejected from the lists and thrashed, and similarly Archilochus" (42).

This is strong stuff, and leads naturally to questions of Heraclitus' expectations of poets. On this more later. Let us look for the moment at a later philosopher who is clearly influenced by Heraclitus, both in general philosophical stance and in his attitude to poetry, and who in turn will, I suggest, help us to understand more clearly the grounds for Heraclitus' fulminations. This is Plato, and in particular the Plato of the so-called "middle" dialogues, a time of conviction on his part that there is such a thing as the unequivocally real and that such reality is knowable. Such reality consists of the Forms – eternal existents transcending space-time *(Phdr.* 247c–e) and the ontological counterparts of some if not all general terms in language *(Resp.* 596a). Their existence, role and status we have on the word of Plato himself, and also their role as guarantor that the universe is, as its name (*to pan*) suggests, a basic unity underpinning diversity, not just a Democritean chaos. The crucial point of agreement with Heraclitus is, of course, on

the fact of the possibility of knowledge, not on its putative object. In this he and Heraclitus operate on a strikingly similar wavelength. At a human level, knowledge is attainable by certain insightful individuals (Heraclitus, Plato, the philosopher-rulers), whose statement *(logos)* of the way things are is a pale reflection of a cosmic statement of the same, uttered *ab aeterno* by *to sophon* (the world's rational and governing principle) (Heraclitus) or by the Demiurge (the world's rational and governing principle for Plato). At *Timaeus* 41a ff., the Demiurge is described as speaking (*legein*) to the astral gods before the formation of the world as we know it, and the *logos* he utters, like that of Heraclitus' *to sophon*, is both descriptive and normative; what the Demiurge says both describes the world and outlines what he calls the "Laws of Destiny". The Demiurge who utters the *logos* is also, it seems to me, a soul (on the principle, enunciated at *Tim.* 30b, that "*nous* cannot come to be present in anything apart from soul") and synonymous, almost certainly, with the "best soul" described later in *Laws* 10. So it comes as no surprise that the first creation of the Demiurge, that "intelligent" World Soul that will last forever (36e), expresses *its* intelligence too in *utterance (logos,* 37a ff.). The nature of the utterance is also unsurprising, at any rate to anyone acquainted with the epistemology of the *Republic.* When the object of the utterance is *to noeton*, i.e., the World of Forms, the utterance will be that of incontrovertible *nous* and *episteme*; when its object is the universe of sense, the utterance will consist merely of *pisteis* and *doxai,* though always "true" ones (37b).

The whole question of *logos* in Plato could be pursued much further, and I shall for the moment confine myself to two comments about it. First, he has it seems elaborated a system in which goodness and intelligence are manifest not least in *quality of utterance,* be it at the level of the Demiurge himself, World Soul, or the philosopher-ruler. Secondly, and perhaps more speculatively, access to an understanding of that "balanced tension" which is the universe of both Heraclitus and Plato is by a process that *involves logos* and *mirrors* the tension, and that process is of course *dialektike.* To put it differently, man achieves by process what *to sophon*/the Demiurge possesses eternally: for Heraclitus a knowledge of the plan whereby the Unity that is the universe operates (frs. 41, 50), for Plato that and at least a dim additional acquaintance with the Planner, that *demiourgos* and

father whom it is a hard task to find, as he puts it *(Tim.* 28c), "and having found impossible to declare to all mankind".

Within the framework of such a cosmo-theology and epistemology Plato (in the *Republic)* turns his gaze on Greek poetry and the arts generally. Not unpredictably, he is uncomfortable with much of what he finds. Greece's *mousikoi* are Greece's educators; *mousike* consists of *logoi;* and "there are two species of *logoi,* the one true, the other false" (376e). The objectively false is not to be discounted, in terms of educational value, if it "has some truth in it also", like some *mythoi* (but far from all) told to children (377a). But too much put out by *mythopoioi,* like Homer, Hesiod, Aeschylus and others, consists of *mythoi* with no claim to even residual truth-content. What they tell us about the gods, for example, is frequently a bold mis-statement of the case; so much so that Plato could point to a sizeable list of predecessors and contemporaries whose only solution to embarrassment in the matter lay in an unabashedly allegorical interpretation *(hyponoia)* of unacceptable passages.

But this is not the whole story. A statement by a *mythopoios,* to be educationally acceptable, must not only have basic truth-content, but truth-content of a sort likely to inculcate appropriate *aretai* in the heart of the listener or reader (377c and *passim).* Empedocles' principle remains basic: only a *mythos* which is *kalos* as well as true can perform the task of "moulding" the *psyche* of the young (377bc) into that *kallos psyches* which for Plato is the incontrovertible aim of all education.

The notion of *logos/mythos* as an inculcator of *arete* is of course a moral one, not an epistemological one, but the two are still closely conjoined; the statement of a (basically) true state of affairs (377a) concerning a morally uplifting subject is still a true, if narrowly focussed, statement. Which brings us back to the views of Heraclitus. Archilochus, we must assume, "deserved a thrashing" (fr. 42) not just for mis-describing the real, but for doing it in a way damaging to the inculcation of *arete,* particularly military *arete,* and likely to encourage lawlessness and *hybris.* In Heraclitus' words: "Better deaths win <for themselves> better destinies" (fr. 25); "gods and men honour those slain by Ares" (fr. 24); "the best choose one thing in place of all <other> things: ever-flowing glory among mortals. The majority, however, glut themselves, like cattle" (fr. 29); "one man <is the equivalent

of> ten thousand, provided he be *aristos*" (fr. 49); "War is father of all, and king of all. He renders some gods, others men; he makes some slaves, others free" (fr. 33); "there is a greater need to extinguish *hybris* than there is a blazing fire" (fr. 43); "the people must fight on behalf of the law as <they would> for <their> city wall" (fr. 44). As for Plato, it will be remembered that an educationally acceptable *logos* must be *kalos* as well as true *(Resp.* 377bc).

Archilochus is in no such tradition. "Listen to a *kakos logos*", he says at one point (fr. 179* Lasserre). Given that we have no context for the fragment, we cannot be sure of the nature of this *logos* or the exact species of its *kakotes* (possible translations of the phrase range from "a mean comment" to "a disgusting proposition"), but the *kakotes* of much else of what he wrote, as Heraclitus and Plato understood *kakotes,* is beyond question, e.g., "Some Saian is enjoying having my shield … but I saved my life" (fr. 5 West). To the Archilochean "I saved my life" *(psyche)* the undoubted Heraclitean/Platonic rejoinder would have been "Yes, and ruined your soul" *(psyche)*. The *logos* is *kakos* in an archetypal sense of the term: it lauds the basest form of *kakia,* cowardice. It is also *kakos* in Plato's more general sense; given the general operation of the Empedoclean Principle, the likelihood is that such a *logos* will generate in its listeners, especially its younger listeners, not *arete* but its antithesis. The same will be true of such classics of erotica as frs. 119 and 193 (West). Given his value-system, the author is indeed *apsychos* – but as far as Heraclitus and Plato are concerned, in a far deeper sense than he himself could ever have imagined.

Whether Archilochus actively set out to subvert the moral system supposedly found in the Homeric poems remains a matter of dispute. For Heraclitus, apparently, whatever their differences in emphasis and detail, Homer, Archilochus and others shared the common stigma of propounding value-systems either wholly or in part incompatible with that "divine <law>" which "holds sway to the extent it wishes, and suffices for all, and is still left over" (fr. 114); and so likewise thought Plato.

A more speculative matter is the relationship Plato discerned, or thought he discerned, between poetry (especially drama) and sophistry. We can assume that many thinking Athenians took such a relationship for granted, and that they formed the natural and apprecia-

tive audience for Aristophanes' attacks on such "sophistic" lines of Euripides as "My tongue swore …" *(Hipp.* 612; cf. Aristoph. *Thesm.* 275, *Ran.* 101,1471). Given Plato's antipathy to sophists in general and some sophists in particular, it seems not unlikely that he himself would have felt at home in such an audience. But all that this, in itself, would show is that for Plato and others one dramatist in particular had been influenced by the sophists, and in particular by Protagoras. Did anyone, including Plato, ever go further and suggest a nexus between sophistry and poetry as such? On the face of it, No; yet there is one piece of evidence that might suggest it. We know of the common circulation, in the fifth and fourth centuries, of little manuals of eristic, which used as their archetype perhaps Protagoras' *Techne Eristikon,* and in one of those which has survived we see that Greek poetry as a whole, long antedating the sophists themselves, is seen as a source of the sort of truth that certain sophists are prepared to defend, at any rate *argumenti causa.*[1]T Cleobulina, for example, is quoted to the following effect:

> "I saw a man of violence, a thief and a cheat,/
> and his violence was perfectly right" *(Dissoi Logoi* 3.11).

Likewise Aeschylus:

> "The god does not withhold himself from rightful deceit;/
> there are times when the god accepts that it is time for lies" (*ibid.*, 3.12).

The quotations serve as evidence that "to deceive…is just" (3.2). As for the view that "the same things are unacceptable and acceptable" (2.20), the following poetic evidence is adduced:

> "If you discern things in this way, you will find the other law/
> that holds for mortal men: there is nothing that is universally/
> either acceptable or unacceptable, but circumstances take hold of things/
> and make them unacceptable or, conversely, acceptable" (2.19).

Were Plato to have perused such a document, and at one time or another he quite possibly did, one can see it confirming his worst beliefs about both sophists and poets. Not only, it seems, do sophists (such as Protagoras) notoriously corrupt poets (such as Euripides), poets as such so grossly misdescribe reality as to serve as natural grist for the mills of sophists themselves. Such mutual corruption is also, it turns out, of the worst conceivable kind, since in the case of some sophists at any rate (notoriously Protagoras) and some poets (notoriously Euripides) a straight-forward misdescription of the real is not in

fact at issue: the very notion of trying to describe the real at all, *simpliciter,* is called into question. For Plato, as is well known, the natural inference from such a stance is that ugliest of phantasms, moral relativism *(Tht.* 172b), a consequence he must surely have attributed to that poet at any rate for whom the statement "My tongue swore …" was apparently underpinned by an ontological/moral commitment of which Protagoras himself would have been proud: "If one were smart (*sophos*),/one could argue both sides (*disson logon*) of any topic" (Eur. *Antiope* fr. 189). If Plato felt that infection to be particularly widespread among poets, we are looking at a further, and deeper, reason for his claims concerning the educational noxiousness of certain features of Greek poetry, claims which for many people continue to be such a discouraging feature of such dialogues as the *Republic* and *Laws*.

Whatever else may be said about the Heraclitean/Platonic view of the arts, and especially of poetry and drama, one thing is beyond dispute: like that of the rulers of a number of contemporary totalitarian states, it pays the arts the compliment of taking them seriously. And the reason for this is not far to seek. As teachers, in theory and often in fact, poets and dramatists constituted a major potential opposition to philosophers, especially those, it seems, of an idealist bent, and were rendered the compliment of constant attack by them not least because what was taken to be their *Lehre* and *Weltanschauung* had, for the majority of people, a very much greater descriptive and prescriptive plausibility than anything such philosophers were currently propounding. For the compliment one must no doubt be grateful. This can be done with a clear conscience, since fortunately a compliment is logically distinguishable from the rationale which underpins it. The rationale, however, it need hardly be pointed out, has been under attack for some time among philosophers and students of the arts not inclined to totalitarian political systems. The mimetic theory of art has been written off as possessing at best a minute grain of plausibility, and the Platonic ascription of the minimum level of "truth" to the arts has long been castigated as the product of a naive theory of truth and a misguided apprehension of the nature of the arts. There is *no* "truth" (about anything), say these critics, that any one of the arts supposedly "states", in verbal, plastic or any other form; and there is no absolute set of moral values that any one of the arts need expound,

let alone uphold. With such criticisms many will instinctively, and in my view rightly, agree, if not with the intemperate manner in which they are occasionally expressed. Some have looked to find extenuating circumstances in the "aristocratic ethos" of the two philosophers in question, but this fails to convince. A bare generation after Plato the aristocratic Aristotle propounded a political and artistic theory in which the arts were as integrated into civic life as they had in fact ever been.

Are we to conclude, then, that the supposed contest between *poiesis* and philosophy is in fact a pseudo-contest, confusedly set up by two philosophers who misunderstood some elementary things about art? This is a conclusion many would draw, and not without some justification. But a number of further points should be made.

First, while it was no doubt erroneous to think that the *logos* or *Lehre* of poets and artists should be such as either to restate or reflect in another medium the *logos* of a Heraclitus or philosopher-ruler, it is not necessarily correct to think that *Lehre* is wholly irrelevant to the artistic enterprise. With significant art the *Lehre* is real enough, but it is, among other things, the *Lehre* of ongoing challenge to the *logoi* of self-appointed *prophetai* of *to sophon* or *auto to agathon* or the like. The challenge may be verbal, or implicatory, or both. Euripides saw this with clarity; so did some of the sophists, as we have seen above. Notoriously, Plato *(Tht.* 161c ff.) read the *Antiope* doctrine as a claim that contradictory *logoi* are of equal truth-value, but there is no evidence for believing that Euripides or Protagoras or any other sophist or *poietes* wanted to say anything so foolish. To set up, and examine, contradictory (or supposedly contradictory) *logoi* is not only part of the sophistic and dramatic enterprise, it is also, ironically, the heart of the philosophical enterprise that is, in fact, *Socrates*' claim to fame, *dialektike*. Like the sophists (or, as some would have it, like other sophists), Socrates appears to have believed that the process of dialectic is justifiable in its own right, without commitment to the (Platonic) view that the "end" of the process would be an incontrovertibly true *logos* about some aspect of an unchanging reality. It is, many would agree, unfortunate that Plato went off on his own tangent here; barely a generation earlier, the sophists, Euripides and Socrates were quite remarkably agreed, and with good reason, on the intrinsic value of

ongoing challenge, including artistic challenge, to the philosophical enterprise.

Second, while it was no doubt, for the aforementioned reason, unacceptable for Heraclitus and Plato to have asked *poietai* to support a particular system of *arete* as the only one, and to use their art to inculcate and maintain such a system in their hearers, they could have legitimately told them to expect constraints upon that art in any society in which the moral standards of the majority were affronted by it. The point is a social and psychological, rather than a moral one, and has been faced by unpopular artists and philosophers both before and since Euripides withdrew in disgust to Macedon and Socrates drained the hemlock. *Arete,* in other words, does indeed count in the artistic and philosophical calculus; but the constraints it imposes are, as Socrates saw, civic, and not, as Plato thought, metaphysical.

Third, to return to a point touched on earlier, the strongest thing that can be said in favour of the Heraclitean/Platonic view of art is that it takes such art seriously. Given everything else, mostly negative, that can be said about such a view this may seem a small drop of wine in a large barrel of vinegar. The antithesis of their position, however, is no less unacceptable; a society in which the arts are viewed as irrelevant to the quality of life is *ou bioton anthropoi.* Again it is the sophists, Euripides and Socrates who point the way to that position of sensible, instinctive *mesotes* from which Heraclitus and Plato diverged and to which Aristotle happily returned. At the heart of the enterprise called *bios* lies (self)-examination *(exetasis),* an examination stimulated by the speeches of Medea and Jason, by the Melian Dialogue, by Socrates' interrogation of Euthyphro on piety or Protagoras on *arete,* and by the poet's throw-away line, "What do I care about that shield?" (Archilochus fr. 5.3 West). At this level *poiesis* and philosophy meet as equals, and for Socrates perhaps more than that. On his death-bed, searching for a phrase to sum up his idea of the philosophical enterprise, he called it, in a memorable and magnificent phrase, *megiste mousike (Phd.* 61a).

Note

1 See T. M. Robinson. *Contrasting Arguments. An Edition of the Dissoi Logoi* (Arno Press 1979). The treatise consists of nine sections, the opening five of which propound first an identity-thesis (e.g., "good

and evil are the same"; "truth and falsity are the same"), and then an apparently, though not necessarily contradictory counter-thesis (e.g., "good and evil are different"; "truth and falsity are different".) Thesis and counter-thesis are in all instances backed with a series of arguments in their support, and the reader is left to assess their quality. We are clearly looking at some sort of sophistic "workshop", though an exact account of it is difficult to put together, given the paucity of the evidence.

2. Methodology in the Reading of Heraclitus

What makes the study of Presocratic philosophical thinking unusually interesting is the fact that in many cases the thinking has to be established before it can be assessed, but often cannot be so established without some prior assessment of at any rate the general structure of the philosopher's thought. Whether the circularity of reasoning this appears to involve is vicious or merely methodological is one of a number of problems faced by the newcomer to this hazardous terrain. *Pari passu* with it come problems of distinguishing genuine utterances from instances of indirect speech; of distinguishing the varying degrees of value of such instances, if/when they have been established to one's satisfaction, in the understanding of the philosopher's thought; and of estimating whether the philosopher has any sort of recognisable system of thought, and if so what would count as evidence that the system has one particular set of contours rather than another. No better example of such a thinker exists than Heraclitus, the apparent complexity and obscurity of whose thinking has baffled commentators from the beginning. I say "apparent" because to assume complexity and obscurity from the outset may well be to add a pseudo-problem to a long list of real ones. Not the least of the features of a sound technique for investigating Heraclitus, if we can discover one, will be a device for deciding which if any of his statements are actually of limpid clarity, and as such undeserving of the over-subtle and ultimately misleading interpretations sometimes foisted upon them by well-meaning interpreters anxious to credit him with obscurity (read: greatness) in each and every utterance. Socrates for one found him perfectly intelligible in some parts at any rate of what he said.[1] Matters are further complicated by the variety and range of interpretations of Heraclitus from antiquity onwards proffered by those determined to find for themselves some sort of precursor; among many I might mention the Stoics in antiquity and more recently a number of Hegelian and Marxist interpreters. Any methodology for interpreting Heraclitus will have to include some assessment of the meta-question whether such "discoveries" of a Greek precursor, be it Heraclitus, Plato or Aristotle, are a comment on an apparently universal need for the security blanket provided by the thought that one's own ideas were once ap-

parently (and one should stress the word "apparently") shared by one of the world's indisputably great philosophers and are to that degree somehow legitimised, or whether they are simply a function of all meaningful interpretation of an earlier thinker that cannot and should not be avoided, but must at all times be treated with caution and scepticism, not least by the interpreters themselves. Finally, no attempt at establishing a methodology of interpretation can forgo comment, however brief, on Professor Kahn's challenging work on Heraclitus,[2] in which the whole question of methodology is brought to the fore and theories propounded which, while not new in other areas of text-criticism, were a decade ago very new indeed among interpreters of classical Greek texts.

For the rest of this paper I plan to outline what I myself take to be an acceptable set of principles of interpretation of Heraclitus, and then to offer an example of those principles in operation in the case of one or two well-known fragments or putative fragments.

We can begin with a large, and undoubtedly contentious assumption. Aristotle, it will be remembered, accused Heraclitus of flouting the principle of non-contradiction, quoting such fragments as 88 to substantiate his case. There are those who have agreed with Aristotle's assessment of the situation, but it seems to me doubtful if one can uphold it and still maintain that Heraclitus' thought remains amenable to any form of rational analysis. It is of course possible, and Aristotle may have believed this, that Heraclitus it is at base irrational, in which case no attempt at rational analysis will ever prove anything other than misguided. But is seems to me a fundamental axiom of interpretation that every thinker takes his own thinking to be understandable by somebody, even if that somebody is only himself, and to that degree he is in fact committed to the law of non-contradiction, whatever the possible drift of various statements in his writings. So my instinct is to follow Socrates in this matter against Aristotle; Delian divers may occasionally have to dive deep, and through waters that are often obscured, but there is a bottom to the dive, and many pearl-oysters there worth the diving for.

To claim that Heraclitus almost certainly did in fact adhere to the principle of non-contradiction is not to claim however that he *eo ipso* propounded a unified "doctrine" of some sort. It is merely to claim that whatever views on whatever topics he espoused, he is highly unlikely to have held that any view "A" and a putative view "not-A"

were at the same time in the same place and under the same formal circumstances both true. Whether the ensemble of his sayings further constitutes a doctrine of sorts remains a question for investigation.

How the question could possibly be resolved leads us into interesting terrain. Broadly speaking, two major methodological approaches seem feasible: either to assume that there is a system till evidence from the text emerges to suggest the contrary, or to assume that there is not a system till evidence from the text emerges to suggest the contrary. The former approach, not surprisingly, tends to be adopted by those who themselves have a clearly articulated philosophical system of their own, and the result in many cases, though certainly not all, is a tendency to find their own fair philosophical image in the pool. The latter approach tends to be adopted by those whose philosophical beliefs can be broadly characterised as empiricist, and by those who would probably be surprised to be told they adhere to any philosophical system at all, but who on investigation turn out in most cases to be of empiricist bent, in philology if not in expressed philosophy. Methodologically speaking, both positions are comprehensible, and both perhaps just a little extreme. A workable compromise would I think combine the assumption that, until it appears otherwise, Heraclitus has some coherent view of things to propound, however darkly, and the assumption that such views will most likely emerge by the application of, among other things, a number of well-tested philological techniques of a generally empirical nature. The compromise has in fact been accepted by a fair number of scholars in recent years, the differences in their interpretations resulting largely from the differing emphasis they place on the two assumptions in question and from their degree of willingness totally to forgo the yearning to find a philosophical precursor. Part and parcel of the compromise has been to treat with a good deal of caution the *testimonia* stemming from antiquity, especially those of Stoic provenance. A new and challenging questioning of some features of the compromise has been issued in recent years by Charles Kahn, with his emphasis on the notions of linguistic density, resonance and systematic ambiguity as major guides to interpretation, along with the concept of what, following others, he calls the "hermeneutical circle".[3] My own views on these matters, which I shall attempt to illustrate with a few examples, can be briefly stated. First and foremost, no single guiding principle of interpretation is ever likely to be satisfactory; at all times a battery of approaches to Heraclitus is called for: philoso-

phical, historical, cultural, philological, literary and literary-theoretical, artistic, and in some measure political and anthropological. While carefully excluding from the list any notion of hunting for ideological precursors, I am of course aware of something many would consider even more dangerous, and that is the assumption on the part of an investigator that he or she is actually ideology-free. But the general empiricism which tends to underlie such assumptions seems to me of all ideologies the least harmful, in that it may finish up failing to notice a system which is there, but seldom makes the more harmful error of imposing a system which never was there. A useful brake on unbridled empiricism, however, especially the philological empiricism to which I myself am partial, is the hermeneutical approach articulated by Kahn, with two provisos: first, that the so-called hermeneutical circle not be allowed to slide imperceptibly into hermeneutical circularity; and second, that in the matter of supposed resonance, density and systematic ambiguity, the possible be kept at all times distinct from the probable.

This has been all somewhat abstract; let us spend a while attempting to flesh out some of the ideas with examples.

1). The much-controverted question of the nature of *logos*. The philological researches of many scholars have turned up no evidence, as far as I know, to suggest that at the time of Heraclitus' *floruit* the focal meaning of *logos* was anything other that a meaningful sentence or proposition uttered by a human (or divine) being; by easy extension this could be understood in various economic and mathematical contexts as ratio, formula or the like. The further extension of meaning, to refer to that rationality which manifests itself in the utterance of meaningful propositions, was not yet part of standard parlance, and the further hypostatization of the concept that would turn it into the divine principle of Reason in the universe was almost two centuries away. For these reasons I have argued recently, following West and others, that *logos* should be translated as something like "statement" or "account".[4] But surely, it could be replied, to do this is to close down an interesting set of possibilities of interpretation, many of them potentially fruitful ones? This seems to me very doubtful. Our choices are only twofold: either to find some other single-word translation, which would almost certainly be deemed equally restrictive by many, or to leave the word untranslated, as many commentators do. The latter move has a certain *prima facie* plausibility, but fails ultimately be-

cause to the Greeks themselves who heard Heraclitus the word *logos* was not a foreign word. It had a focal meaning, like any other term in the language. It also had extensions of that focal meaning, of which thinking Greeks were in various degrees aware. The duty of the translator, as I see it, is to do all that is possible to identify that focal meaning for the period in history when the word was current and to translate accordingly, taking care to acknowledge in commentary those extensions that appear to be at least obliquely part of the author's intent in any given context. The goal is always achieved imperfectly, and much disagreement over detail can be tolerated, provided the ground rules are accepted. The focal meaning of *logos,* for example, could be and has been taken by various scholars as "account", "statement", "formula" or "law". All are reasonable translations, since all show sensitivity to the linguistic pedigree of the word in question, and all would I think be perfectly acceptable translations of the word in fragments 1, 2 and 50. None of these translations however would fit fragment 45, where the *logos* of soul is presumably, and by extension from a well understood focal meaning, to be translated as "measure". The weakness of not translating *logos* is that possibility and probability become easily confused, and a range of meanings for *logos* tolerated that make sense as a totality but are seldom if ever all or even mostly all appropriate in any given context.

What about systematic ambiguity in Heraclitus? That there is such seems evident; one need only point to what Heraclitus does with the concept of *harmonie*. But here again there is a danger of thinking one has found an instance of such ambiguity when all that one has really found is a piece of unwitting syntactical or grammatical ambiguity. Writing about fr. 12, Kahn for example says two translations are possible: (1) "into the same rivers, as they step", and (2) "into rivers, as the same (men) step". But the second possibility is merely a syntactical possibility; in the context of the whole sentence it makes no sense (the waters flow over the bathers, not over the rivers). A similar problem occurs over the phrase *to sophon*. In different contexts it can mean "that <entity> which is wise" (fr. 108) and "that which is wise" in the sense of "the wise policy" or "the wise procedure", following normal grammatical practice (e.g., in fr. 41). No systematic ambiguity seems intended on Heraclitus' part; and certainly none which could lead one to interpret fr. 41 as intentionally "ambiguous between … two conceptions of wisdom, human and divine" (Kahn, p. 171). Another ex-

ample of merely syntactical ambiguity can be found at fr. 114. The straightforward translation of the central sentence here is: "for all laws are nourished by one <law>, the divine <law>". But Kahn sees another instance here of fruitful ambivalence; the phrase *tou theiou* could mean either the divine <law> or simply "the divine", in the sense of the supreme cosmic principle. But in the linguistic context the interpretation "the divine" is so remote a linguistic possibility that it can be safely discarded; the flow of the sentence and standard usage admit of only one viable interpretation. This example is worth dwelling on for a moment, since it has hermeneutical implications. After pleading the possibility that *tou theiou* can mean "the divine" in fr. 41, Kahn goes on to translate the whole phrase *henos tou theiou* as "a *(sic)* divine one". This in turn enables him to find a supposed piece of systematic ambiguity in fr. 33, normally translated "it is law also to obey the counsel of one" *(henos)*. The word *henos* can be taken to mean either "the advice of one man" or "the plan of one principle", says Kahn, depending on whether one takes it as masculine or neuter. But the latter reading, suggesting a "cosmic" interpretation of the fragment, is not only per se unlikely but itself based upon a reading of *tou theiou* in fr. 114 as "the divine one" that does not stand up to examination. We are looking here, not at a supposed "hermeneutical circle", but at hermeneutical circularity.

2). While the above are a few examples of some of the pitfalls facing any commentator seeking out examples of resonance or phonetic echo, none constitute an argument against the notion itself, which seems to me admirably elucidatory in the case of words like *logos* and *homologeein* (frs 1, 2, 50, 51 *et alib.),* and highly likely to be operative in the case of the words *palintropos* and *tropai* (frs 51, 31a). The same could be said for the notion of systematic ambiguity, which seems clearly operative in, for example, fragment 1 in the case of the adverb *aiei.* The question is in fact a rather succinct exemplification of the difference between traditional philology and contemporary hermeneutical techniques. Aristotle, followed by large numbers of commentators, asks the instinctive question: what item in the sentence does this adverb govern?[5] There are two clear possibilities; which of the two could it be? The hermeneuticist, assuming as a definite possibility that systematic *ambiguity* could well have been Heraclitus' intention, asks what the value of such a piece of ambiguity could be in the understanding of the author's thought. Each approach can be defended. Sys-

tematic ambiguity is always a logical possibility, and can never be excluded by the semi-automatic application of exclusive disjunction. Whether the logical possibility is a real one however can often only be determined by basic philological techniques involving standard grammar and syntax and the bounds of possibility they might reasonably tolerate. In a word, traditional philology and contemporary hermeneutics serve as a useful constraint upon each other in this as in many other regards, and can, if used with caution, be reasonably viewed as complementary rather than contradictory. A few examples of this, to clarify my meaning. A famous fragment (60) reads literally: "road up down one and the same <road>". In an attempt to make this fit a preconceived notion of the nature of Heraclitean cosmology, large numbers of commentators translate the sentence sloppily as "the way up and the way down are one and the same". In so doing such commentators have found just what they were looking for, and what Heraclitus may indeed have meant; unfortunately, what he actually says is much more prosaic, and may or may not constitute a reference to his cosmology. Still less is it evidence for a supposed doctrine of the "identity of opposites" that many still claim to find in Heraclitus and which led an Aristotle to accuse him of denying the law of non-contradiction. All that it need mean is that apparent opposites (an "up" road and a "down" road) can frequently turn out to be one and the same road (i.e., a single road) viewed from different perspectives (in this case the bottom of a hill and the top of that hill). The doctrine being propounded would appear to be the general one (see frs 58, 59) that opposite features of the same object/action/event/state of affairs will be highlighted, depending on the perspective from which it is viewed. As such the doctrine appears wholly general; to read it as referring specifically to cosmology may be correct, but is not particularly warranted by what Heraclitus himself has said. It is also a statement in which the "identity" in question is clearly perspectival, and as such a very useful indicator of how to understand such fragments as 88, where the "sameness" is in context not the sameness enjoyed by supposed "opposites" but rather the preservation of self-identity through change. A final example of the perspectival use of the term "same" can be found in fragment 15, where, it is said, "Hades and Dionysus…are <one and> the same". As I have put it elsewhere,[6] "the perspectival identity in this case is probably that which exists between the drunken couplings of Dionysiac festivals viewed as an act productive of life

(i.e., another life), and hence an act of worship of the Life-god, and the same event viewed as an act productive of death (i.e., the death of one's own *psyche* by drowning; see frs 36, 117, 118), and hence an act of worship of the Death-god. Hades and Dionysus, on this interpretation, are "the same" in the sense that one and the same act turns out to be an unwitting act of worship of both. As Heraclitus puts it in fr. 88, "As the same thing there exists in us living and dead". *Psyche* is the most likely candidate for such a description, in moments of drunkenness and Dionysiac frenzy alive *qua* life-principle and driving force towards reproduction, but dead *qua* rational and directive force or substance".

This brief discussion of the notion of identity in Heraclitus is I think instructive, in that it both suggests the importance of resonance as a guiding principle of interpretation and at the same time warns of certain pitfalls in its application. On the one hand what seems a clear example, in context, of the use of the term "same" in a purely perspectival way can offer valuable guidance in the interpretation of fragments where the context is a less helpful indicator of meaning. The danger (of hermeneutical circularity) lies in the application of one particular sound interpretation on too broad a scale. In this instance, two extreme possibilities lie at hand: either to see every instance of "sameness" in Heraclitus as purely perspectival, or to refuse to see any of them as such and thereby to saddle him with the denial of a basic principle of discourse and understanding. The truth would rather appear to be a modified version of the first view; in this as in several other cases the great strength of Heraclitus is his exquisite care over words and the structuring of words. Conceptual univocity is of little interest to him; meaningful density, by contrast, in central to his discourse. And the onus is on the reader to watch for signs that indicate the various strata of density. Those signs, more often than not, consist of words and the possibilities of words, as they stretch and chafe within the ineluctable constraints of context and pedigree.

Two further examples will I hope highlight the point I am trying to make, and will bring us round to the concept of "density". The very strange looking fr. 26 can be made to yield a reasonable sense, it seems to me, provided one pays attention to the density of the term *haptesthai,* which can of course mean either to touch or to kindle or strike a light <for oneself>. In words I have used previously,[7] "this is one of the most puzzling of the fragments, drawing its apparent force, as so

often in Heraclitus, from the exploitation of an ambiguity *(haptesthai* = [a] "touch" [b] "kindle" or "strike <for oneself>"). Any attempt at interpretation must base itself on certain assumptions, the main one being whether the "night" in question is to be understood as the "night of death" (Clement) or not. I am myself inclined so to take it, on the grounds that, if that is what Heraclitus had in mind, the rest of the fragment can be plausibly interpreted as the description of a form of "continuity" *(haphe,* literally "contact": cf. *haptesthai)* that constitutes a cycle closely analogous to the everlasting cycle of change of the great world-masses (fr. 31).

The point is made clearer if one takes Heraclitus' assertions in reverse order. Our waking selves and our sleeping selves are, as Heraclitus might well have expressed it (frs 60, 80) "one and the same". In terms of the cyclical metaphor, there is no "break" between them, i.e., no break in their continuity. The continuity is also such that the *psyche* of someone who is awake in this world is describable as being at the furthest possible remove from, in the sense of "most dissimilar in *state* to", the *psyche* of that same person when dead, and closest of all to, in the *sense of "most similar* in state to", the *psyche* of that same person when asleep. The same can be said for the continuity between the *psyche* of the living person and the *psyche* of the same person during the night of death; it is once again one and the same *psyche,* but the two "states" thereof are the most similar to each other of all possible states of *psyche* and thus, in "contact" with each other.

At death (i.e., at the time of separation of *psyche* and body), the soul which with the loss of *physical* sight loses contact with this world establishes immediate contact, without break in the continuity, with the obscure world beyond by means of its *own* organ of vision (what Plato will later call "the eye of the soul"); in terms of Heraclitus' own metaphor, the "striking up *(haptesthai)* of the light" (always there but only lit on the occasion it is needed) and the "striking up of *contact" (haptesthai)* with the next world are one and the same activity, and the soul in question one and the same soul, in "separate" states that are in fact continuous with one another."

Fragment 62 (another great puzzler) can also be made to yield a reasonable sense provided one adverts at all times to the pedigree of the words *athanatos* and *thnetos* and the crucial implications of the syntax in which Heraclitus has chosen to express himself. Again in words I have used elsewhere,[8] "Most rightly interpret the reference to

"immortals" as a reference to the eternally existent gods to whom the term "immortals" was consistently applied by the Greeks. But Heraclitus the lover of language was, we can assume, fully aware that the word in Greek simply means "deathless" (without necessarily implying "*birthless*", i.e., enjoying "eternal" life), and the resulting ambiguity allows him to propose a paradox that turns out on examination to be less extravagant than it has appeared to many. The key to the puzzle is, it seems to me, fr. 63, where the "deathless ones" in question are those heroes whose everlasting reward is to become "wakeful guardians of living <people> and corpses". As humans they die; as *daimones* they are "deathless", i.e., are not *further* subject, thanks to their new state, to death. So a certain class of "immortals" (i.e., the *daimones,* or more specifically those of them that are such after having once been human) "is mortal" or "consists of mortals" (i.e., *was once* human), and a certain of humans (i.e., heroes) "is immortal" or "consists of immortals" (i.e., *is from now on deathless).*

The next phrases are more complicated, not least because of the uncertainty of interpreting the two accusatives "life" and "death". Are they of the "cognate" form or are they accusatives of "respect"? An air of paradox is created by an assumption of the former, and the puzzle (in part) solved by an interpretation in terms of the latter. For it is in respect of their erstwhile mortality that hero-*daimones* are fairly describable as immortal (i.e., no longer subject to mortality), and in respect of <the present quality of their> "deathlessness" (i.e., a deathlessness which, unlike that of the *everlasting* gods, has a beginning) that hero-*daimones* are fairly describable as "mortals" (i.e., they once *were* people subject to death).

For purposes of this interpretation, it matters little whether Heraclitus meant the adjectives "mortal"/"immortal" to serve as nouns or adjectives in the complement position in his opening words. For in either case no definite articles are used, either in the subject or complement position. Thus if syntax is to be our guide, Heraclitus has apparently carefully guarded himself *against* any universal interpretation of the form "the class of X and the class of Y are one and the same" (i.e., against an interpretation involving a supposed doctrine of the coincidence of opposites). The language in which he has chosen to express himself on the contrary suggests strongly that he was thinking of sub-classes within the class of "mortals"/"everlasting ones"; in other words, that the statement "immortals are mortal(s)" etc. is to be

unpacked as "one sub-class (X1) of X and one sub-class (Y1) of Y are one and the same". Once this is seen, the contents of fr. 63 become immediately relevant guides to interpretation; XI makes clear sense if understood as the sub-class of immortals constituted by *daimones,* and YI the sub-class of mortals constituted by heroes".

To summarize quickly what I have been trying to do. I have been stressing the time-honored value of word-in-context philology in the interpretation of Heraclitus, along with the value of a number of contemporary hermeneutical devices. Of these the one I have myself found most useful to date is that of linguistic density, perhaps because of its basic familiarity as a notion if not as a technical term. I have also found very valuable the concepts of resonance and systematic ambiguity, though this time the booby-traps surrounding them seem a little more thickly concentrated. In the final analysis old-style philology and contemporary hermeneutical techniques seem to me more complementary than contradictory, each serving, if used sensitively, as a valuable brake on the other . And one of the greatest merits of Kahn's work on Heraclitus, it seems to me, has been to compel us to confront this point. I am confident that in the long run Heraclitus scholarship will be the better for it.

Notes

1 Diog. Laert. 2.22 (DK 22. A4).

2 Charles H. Kahn, *The Art and Thought of Heraclitus,* Cambridge 1979.

3 *Op. cit.,* 89 ff.

4 T. M. Robinson. *Heraclitus. Fragments,* Toronto 1987, *ad* fr. 1.

5 Arist. *Rhet.* 5. 1407bll ff. (DK 22. A4).

6 Robinson, *ad* fr. 15.

7 *Op. cit.*, ad fr. 26.

8 *Op. cit.*, ad fr. 62.

3. Heraclitus and Parmenides on What Can be Known

In this paper I wish to argue that Parmenides and Heraclitus, despite significant differences in other respects, agreed on the following fundamentals:

1) Knowledge in the strictest sense is possible, but it is always of the general or universal. As a consequence the only true object of knowledge can be the real as a whole.
2) This real-as-a-whole is co-extensive with what is normally referred to as the world, in the sense of all that exists and/or all that is the case.
3) The real as a whole is eternal (Parmenides) or everlasting (Heraclitus), and unchanging; in respect of its parts it is subject to temporal process and change.
4) What the senses can tell us about the real in respect of its parts is not always reliable; but their role can still be a valuable one.
5) Reality, knowledge and a rational account (*logos*) go hand in hand; this is true both for our own account of the real and for the real's account of itself.
6) The relationship between knowledge and the real, and between a number of supposedly opposing features of the real, is one of necessary interconnectedness, boldly described by both philosophers in terms of identity.

Notoriously, Xenophanes had doubts about whether *knowledge* of anything – as distinct from mere opinion – was possible, and as far as we know he was the first philosopher to express the point with trenchancy.

"No man", he says, "knows or will ever know the truth about the gods or about everything I speak of. For even if one chanced to say the complete truth, one is not oneself in a state of *knowledge* (i.e., as to whether one *has* chanced upon the complete truth, as Sextus takes it, or – more generally – as to what one *claims* to know, TMR); "for seeming is wrought over all things".[1]

One direct result of his questionings was an onus felt by his successors to show their hand on the matter, on pain of seeing their own

work written off as just another set of opinions if they did not. It comes as no surprise therefore to find both Heraclitus and Parmenides expressing themselves forcefully on the topic in the early stages of their respective works.

For Heraclitus the account (*logos*) of the real is everlastingly true and describes a world that, despite constant change in respect of its parts, is one that is fundamentally a whole or unity, and as such a whole or unity everlasting.[2] The account in question is not his own, except derivatively, but rather that being uttered everlastingly by the real itself and comprehended by the individual who takes the trouble to learn its language.[3] Elsewhere (fr. 67) Heraclitus suggests strongly that it is this real – in all its apparently divergent aspects – that is in fact the divine.

The road to knowledge of the real's utterances concerning itself is a long and hard one,[4] but at its end insight (*noos*) (fr. 114) is finally achieved, and the nature of the real, along with the descriptive and prescriptive laws it everlastingly frames (frs. 1, 2, 50, 114), laid bare.

For Parmenides, likewise, the real is knowable, but again it is only the real as a totality (*pan*) which is so knowable, not a real which is putatively fragmented.[5] This real as a whole is, as it is for Heraclitus, without beginning or end and changeless as such (frs 8.3 ff., 8.26 ff.). The true account which describes this real is again derivatively that of Parmenides himself, but at base it is, analogously to that being uttered everlastingly by Heraclitus' "divine" universe, the account propounded by a divinity, who *in* propounding it is also thereby the guarantor of its truth (fr. 1).

For both philosophers there is only one route that can possibly be followed if knowledge of the real is to be attained. For Parmenides it is the route of "is and necessarily is" statements (fr. 2.3), its end-point a reality-as-a-whole (fr. 8.5) that is both knowable and "pointable-to in words" (= "the subject of ostensive definition"?) (fr. 2.7–8). For Heraclitus it is that real which is, did they but know it, "common" to all humans (fr. 2).

Though the two philosophers have expressed themselves differently here, it seems to me very likely they are expressing the same general idea. In grappling with the challenge laid down by Xenophanes, both have sensed that, if knowledge is to be possible at all, it will necessarily involve apprehension of the general or universal aspect of the

real. Parmenides comes closest to making the point explicitly in fr. 16, which should I think be translated as follows:

> "The *way in which* an individual[6] ascertains[7] depends on the way his much-wandering body-components are co-ordinated. For *what* the body's nature knows is identical for each and every person; for the *plenum* is ascertainment".[8]

The final phrase here is expressed in terms of identity, but is probably best understood in terms of necessary interconnectedness, as so often in Heraclitus.[9] If this is correct, Parmenides is saying that there is a necessary connection between a state of (genuine)[10] apprehension and its sole possible object, the real as a totality. People differ in the way in which they apprehend this sole possible object, given our differing bodily make-up, but all, to the degree that they do genuinely ascertain, ascertain a single, common object – the real as a totality.

Where they err is in the opinions they offer concerning this *plenum*. But even here their statements are not meaningless; even an inaccurate description of the real – one, for example, that suggests that the real is fragmented, or in motion – points obliquely to the fact that there is a real to be so misdescribed. So human language, though constantly misleading, is not to be written off as wholly irrational, or, still worse, meaningless. As Parmenides himself puts it:[11]

> "By reference to *which (sc.* to the whole and unchanging real) have all things been named that mortals have established", etc.

Corroboration of the above understanding of Parmenides' meaning is I think to be found in fragment 3, which should be translated:

> "For to ascertain and to be are one and the same".[12]

As in fragment 16, Parmenides expresses in terms of identity a relationship that is more fairly describable as necessary interconnectedness: that is, the relationship between (genuine) ascertainment and reality as the object of that ascertainment. Such reality, he goes on later to say, is to be understood as reality as a totality *(pan)* only (8.5); it is not potentially subdivisible – even logically – into further "realities" of more circumscribed physical or logical extent that might mistakenly be imagined as being *also* possible objects of ascertainment.

A further, intriguing feature of Parmenides' notion of ascertainment is its apparent inclusion of a precise piece of propositional knowledge that goes hand in hand with the object of acquaintance. At 8. 34–36 he says:

> "Ascertainment, and ascertainment *that* <the object ascertained> *is,* is one and the same <process>. For you will not find <an instance of> ascertainment without <also finding> the real in the <proposition> in which it has been expressed".

A hint of this view seems to be found earlier in the poem at 6.1, which should be translated:

> "Necessarily, what is there for describing (*legein*) and ascertaining[13] must exist: for *it* is *available* for existing, whereas nothing is not (i.e., so available, TMR)".

The same could be said for lines 2.7–8, where a similar conjunction of knowledge and pointing-to in words (*phrazein*) is found.

If this interpretation of his tightly expressed language is correct, Parmenides' reality will consist of (a) all that exists, taken as a totality; and (b) all that is the case, as expressed in the single, complex proposition concerning the features of the real that emerge from fragment 8: i.e., the proposition that the real is whole, ungenerated, indestructible, homogeneous, etc. As such it looks very much like the world as defined in Wittgenstein's *Tractatus,* i. e., as the sum total of what is the case. As for the real's being found *in propositions* (another notion with remarkably modern overtones), one should perhaps compare this with Heraclitus' conviction of the power of language to reveal the real, as evidenced by such statements as – punning on *bios* and *bios,* the first accented on the iota, the second on the omicron, fr. 48 – "The bow's name is life, but its job is death!"

Heraclitus has an epistemology which – in part at any rate – overlaps with that of Parmenides. The *logos,* as we have seen, "holds forever", even though people forever fail to appreciate the fact (fr. 1), and it is also "common" (rightly understood by Sextus as "universal").[14] *As* universal, says Heraclitus *(ibid.*), it ought to be *followed,* and at other points he makes clear that this, while being a difficult task, is by no means impossible.[15] For the *logos* is an account being everlastingly uttered by the real, and success in following it will be the achievement of anyone who takes appropriate steps to learn the language being used by the real (fr. 107).

What the account turns out to be is, like Parmenides' account of the real as a totality, relatively simple: i.e., a statement that despite surface appearances the real is a unity (fr. 50). And as a unity it enjoys

features that do not characterise its component parts, such as everlastingness and changelessness (fr. 30).

On the face of it, however, the two philosophers seem to many to have parted company at this crucial point, since the one would appear to be committed to the existence of an eternal, changeless and undifferentiated *eon* that many find incompatible with belief in the existence of the world most people think they know, the other to be equally strongly committed to the existence of the world we do indeed claim to live in, and describing it as being everlasting and changeless in its totality but continuously collecting a history in terms of its component parts. But the supposed difference between them is probably less great than it seems. For Parmenides the world of change is not in fact a non-existent world, but rather the world – *our* world – as it presents itself to *opinion* (*doxa*). As such it everlastingly misleads us as to its overall nature, which is as it is described in fragment 8, but not as to its existence. And being co-extensive with *to eon* in extent and duration, it too, like Heraclitus' world, is therefore reasonably describable as being everlasting.

Where the philosophers do differ is over the mode of duration of the real as a whole as the object of *knowledge*. For Heraclitus, that mode of duration is still thought to be everlasting: for Parmenides it is eternal.[16] While this difference is significant, it does not apparently lead to differing epistemologies. For both Parmenides and Heraclitus knowledge is of the real as a whole, and a *logos* affirming that knowledge is a true one. For Heraclitus such a *logos* can also be uttered by any rational agent, including the real itself. While the latter point is nowhere made explicitly by Parmenides, I have suggested above that, if there is any analogy between his goddess and Heraclitus' god/world, the two philosophers may well share common ground in this respect as well. And while Heraclitus does not go on to say explicitly, as does Parmenides, that any *other* accounts of reality beyond those uttered by the real (the goddess) are (mere) opinions, and therefore implicitly corrigible, this would seem to be a natural inference from what he says about the deceptive nature of the senses (frs 55, 101a, 107). And if this is true, he would appear to have driven just as sharp a division between knowledge and opinion as has Parmenides.

On this interpretation, Parmenides and Heraclitus are agreed on the existence of a single universe, viewed precisely with the universaliz-

ing optic of knowledge and imprecisely and forever corrigibly with the particularizing optic of opinion. It is a view which undoubtedly grapples with the challenge laid down by Xenophanes, and serves as the point of departure for a great deal of subsequent thought on the matter, not least by Plato and Aristotle. Both bought into the idea that the difference between the two states of consciousness is a real one, but differed a) as to whether the two states involved two different intentional objects and b) as to the ontological status of that/those object(s). Both also tussled with a problem that springs naturally from any reading of Heraclitus and Parmenides but was not apparently addressed explicitly by either of them: that is, the relative worth, if any, of any one opinion over any other. And the struggle continues.

Notes

1 Xenophanes, fr. 34 DK. The final statement is difficult to translate. An alternate suggested by Kirk/Raven/Schofield, *The Presocratic Philosophers,* Cambridge, 1983, would be something like "fancy is wrought in the case of all men". James H. Lesher, "Xenophanes' Scepticism", *Phronesis* 23, 1978, 6, suggests "Belief (or supposition) is allotted to all things". Either way, Xenophanes' general position is not obscured, though Lesher argues interestingly that his argument is not one of absolute scepticism, but rather one of scepticism in the absence of a divine revelation. If this view is correct, Heraclitus and Parmenides will be responding, not just to a challenge to demonstrate the possibility of knowledge, but also to name the particular divine authority on which their demonstration rests.

2 Heraclitus, frs 1, 50 DK.

3 *Ibid.,* fr. 107. For the notion that the *logos* of which Heraclitus speaks is the *logos* everlastingly uttered by the real itself, see T. M Robinson, *Heraclitus: Fragments. A Text and Translation, with a Commentary* (University of Toronto Press, 1987) *ad* fr. 1 and *passim.*

4 See, among many, frs 18, 22, 35, 46, 55, 101, 123, and on the general topic Robinson, *op. cit.* 181–182.

5 See below on frs 3 and 8.5.

6 Reading *hekastos. hekastot*' is the reading of some manuscripts and Theophrastus.

7 Throughout the poem I understand *noein* and *noos* to mean in almost all instances "ascertainment" or "insight". While it is true that

both the verb and the noun can in early Greek sometimes mean something rather more general than that, such that translations like "think" and "thinking" would appear appropriate, in the majority of cases the word has specifically cognitive overtones. (For the most recent discussion of the early linguistic evidence see J. H. Lesher, "Perceiving and Knowing in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey", Phronesis* 26, 1981, 2–24. For earlier discussion see K. von Fritz, "*Noos* and *Noein* in the Homeric Poems", *Classical Philology* 38, 1943, 79–93, and "*Noos*, *Noein* and their Derivatives in Pre-Socratic Philosophy (Excluding Anaxagoras), I: From the Beginnings to Parmenides", *Classical Philology* 40, 1945, 223–242. For the strongest and most trenchant statement that *noein* is to be understood cognitively in Parmenides see C. H. Kahn, "The Thesis of Parmenides", *Review of Metaphysics* 22, 1969, 712 ff.). In the case of Parmenides' poem the author himself (fr. 2.7) does us the favour of indicating how he wishes the terms to be understood. Here the verb *gignoskein* (which no-one takes to be anything other than a verb of cognition) is an undoubted analogue of the verb *noein,* since the latter occurs in the very next line (= fr. 3) as part of a proof of the point Parmenides is trying to make. (I say "analogue" only, since, while both verbs are verbs of cognition, the one *[noein]* has overtones of process less clearly apparent in the other). The full argument runs: "If x (as a putative object of "knowledge") does not exist, it *cannot* in fact be known or pointed to in words. For knowing and existing are one and the same (i. e., are necessarily interconnected)".

8 There is much dispute about both the translation of this fragment and whether it is more appropriately fitted into the Way of Truth or the Way of Seeming. As emerges from my argument, I myself think it is most appropriately placed in the Way of Truth. On points of translation: for "his much-wandering body-components" read literally, with Gallop *(Parmenides of Elea: Fragments,* Toronto, 1984), "a union of much-wandering limbs", and for "the body's nature" read more literally, combining Gallop *(ed. cit.)* and Tarán *(Parmenides,* Princeton, 1965), "the nature (*physis*) of the limbs". In the final sentence the word *pleon* is ambiguous (it could conceivably mean "that of which there is more", as many editors take it, understanding Theophrastus to be right in his contention that for Parmenides thought too – not just our physical characteristics – stems from the preponderance of one "opposite" in our body over the other). But the fragment ap-

pears rather to be dealing with, not *thought,* but *ascertainment* (*noos*), and other features of the poem, such as the stress laid on the fact that genuine ascertainment is only of the real as a totality (*pan*, 8.5; cf. 8.22, 8.24), and that as such a totality it is "filled with" (*empleon*) what is real (8.24), suggest strongly that Parmenides is here repeating his point that such a totality is the object of ascertainment. In view of this the translation *"plenum"* seems to me to have a rather higher likelihood of being the right one, and I follow the lead of Untersteiner, *(Parmenide. Testimonianze e Frammenti,* Florence, 1958), Tarán *(ed. cit.),* Gallop *(ed. cit.)* and Couloubaritsis *(Mythe et Philosophie chez Parménide,* Brussels 1986) in adopting it.

9 It is a truism that Heraclitus believed in a *coincidentia oppositorum,* so much so that Aristotle accused him on three occasions of breaking the law of non-contradiction *(Physics* A2, 185b19 ff., *Topics* VIII 5, 159b30 ff., *Metaphysics* Gamma 7, 1012a24; though cf. *Metaphysics* Gamma 3, 1005b23, where Aristotle is apparently less sure the law is being broken). But this is far from obvious. Just as Parmenides at 2.7 offers us a device for rightly understanding what he means by words like *noos* and *noein* in his poem, so Heraclitus at fr. 88 lets us know that his apparent identity-claims are not to be taken literally. What on the surface looks like an instance of the breaking of one of the elementary rules of logic turns out to be on this occasion simply an assertion of self-identity throughout change. See Robinson, *op. cit.*, *ad loc.*

10 I say "genuine" to exclude knowledge-claims which turn out to be mistaken, and hence are in fact simply opinions.

11 Fr. 8.38–39.

12 In antiquity Clement, Plotinus and Proclus read the line as an identity-statement, and with Diels-Kranz, Vlastos (review of J. Zafiropoulo, *L'Ecole Eléate,* Paris, 1950, in *Gnomon* 25, 1953, 168), Kahn *(art. cit.,* 720 ff.) and others I follow their interpretation.

13 An alternate syntactical possibility would read: "for the same thing is there (or: is available) for ascertaining and for being", and this is the direction taken by several translators, including among the most recent Gallop *(ed. cit.*). But this translation seems to me to make less good sense than does the first one as a purported reason why the real, the knowable, and the pointable-to in words have been tightly conjoined in what appears to have been the poem's immediately antece-

dent sentence, i.e., fr. 2.7–3. See above, n. 7, *fin*. The interpretation of the sentence recently championed by Nestor-Luis Cordero ("Les deux chemins de Parménide dans les fragments 6 et 7", *Phronesis* 24, 1979, 24–25) and Denis O'Brien, *Etudes sur Parménide*, I: *Le Poème de Parménide*, Paris, 1987) seems to me to strain credibility.

14 Fr. 2; and Sextus Empiricus, *Adv. Math*. 7. 133. Cf. fr. 114.

15 See above, n. 4.

16 The point is controverted. For the moment I simply signal my agreement with Leonardo Tarán, who seems to me to have successfully argued the case for reading 3.5 in terms of eternity, rather than, as some have held, atemporality. See L. Tarán, "Perpetual Duration and Atemporal Eternity in Parmenides and Plato", *The Monist* 62, 1979, 43–53; and see also Gallop, *ed. cit.* 13–14 and *ibid.* 34, nn. 39–41 for full literature on the topic.

(I should add that I now [2008] believe that what I have in this study called "everlastingness" should more precisely be called "sempiternity". That is to say, I now think one should distinguish that moment without antecedent or subsequent moment which is eternity from that duration without beginning or end which is sempiternity, and further distinguish both of them from that duration with a beginning but without an end which is everlastingness).

4. Heraclitus and Plato on the Language of the Real

It is a commonplace of Platonic scholarship that for Plato a significant, if not the most significant feature of Heracliteanism was the so-called "doctrine of flux". In this paper I wish to discuss another feature of what seems to me basic Heraclitean doctrine that is taken over by Plato, albeit without explicit recognition of the fact, as a central tenet of his cosmo-psychology: the notion of the language of the real. One can begin, as Heraclitus seems himself to have begun, with the statement that is now listed as the opening sentence of fragment 1 in DK:

> "But of this account, which holds forever, people forever prove uncomprehending, both before they have heard it and when once they have heard it".

As many have pointed out, a natural interpretation of the word *logos* here is in terms of the statement or account of things uttered by Heraclitus himself.[1] (For an incontrovertible example of such a usage elsewhere in Heraclitus see fr. 108). This seems to me wholly true as far as the focal meaning of the term is concerned, and part of the truth as far as the reference to Heraclitus is concerned. There is no reason that I know of for not believing that in Heraclitus' day the focal meaning of *logos* was indeed something like statement or account, or that the word ever deviated significantly from that focal meaning in writings of the day; ratio, formula, definition, proportion, reckoning, measure, even "esteem" (fr. 39) – all are easy extensions, be it in the realm of mathematics, engineering or social relations, of what can always be otherwise expressed as a statement or description.[2]

Whether such an account or statement can be described as being merely that of Heraclitus himself however is less clear. A strong hint of something more broad-ranging than that seems to me to be found in fragment 50, in which Heraclitus is apparently at pains to distinguish carefully between himself and the *logos*. For Kirk the statement is strong evidence that *logos* and Heraclitus are "formally distinguished", and this seems to him an argument in favour of interpreting the term in some way other than statement or account.[3] But it seems

just as likely that Heraclitus is trying here to distinguish between himself as "himself" (who is free to say anything about anything) and himself as the bearer of an "account" who is bound by the constraints of that account. If this is the case, one is led naturally to ask what makes this particular account so privileged, and what sort of evidence would help us differentiate it from any other account of anything that Heraclitus might utter in distracted moments. But at a deeper level, one is also led to ask whether the *logos* in question is not also possibly the *logos* of some rational agent *other* than Heraclitus himself, and if so who/what *that* agent could be and what makes *its* account so privileged. For as it stands the sentence is deeply ambiguous (without the presence of a *mou* or *emou,* and/or the availablity of an explicatory context, there is no guarantee that his *own logos* is the one Heraclitus has solely in mind or indeed even has in mind at all), and in view of what we know of Heraclitus' use of ambiguity in other contexts as a device for explicating the real,[4] that the *logos* is not systematically rather than accidentally ambiguous.

The answer to the first question – What makes this particular account so privileged? – is, it turns out, in effect "the factual nature of what that *logos* describes", i.e., that state of affairs whereby the world of multiplicity known to us by sense is in fact in its deeper structure and operations a unity; the nature and cause of that unity; how such a unity relates to the world's evident plurality, etc. Or put differently, the privileged *logos* is such because it is that *logos* which, uniquely, accurately describes the real in all its facets. It also, as it turns out, uniquely and authoritatively prescribes (fr. 114), in broad outline if not in detail, the nature of human conduct within the context of the real that has been described.

For the majority of interpreters for whom the *logos* of which Heraclitus speaks in fragments 1, 2 and 50 is something different from the statement or account uttered by Heraclitus himself the term is understood in many different ways, some of them certainly linked to the sense of *logos* as account or statement, such as "meaning" (Snell), "law" (Marcovich), "argument" (Verdenius), "truth" (Gigon), "measure" (Freeman), "formula," or "plan" (Kirk); others similarly linked perhaps, but nonetheless anachronistic in terms of contemporary usage (such as the Stoic interpretation of it as divine Reason);[5] and a famous one far removed from the word's focal meaning and without contem-

porary linguistic parallel, "structure" (Kirk, *op. cit.* [above, n.2] p. 70), a structure he takes to be "corporeal" in nature (*ibid.,* p. 69) and in its specifically directive aspect describable as "fire" *(ibid.,* p. 402).

Several of the first group of translations – "law", "measure", "formula", "plan" – catch important aspects of the word's meaning, and could each be defended as reasonable interpretations of what Heraclitus had in mind. And all of them, it seems to me, are based on the correct assumption that such a *logos* was, while no doubt echoed by Heraclitus, at base and much more significantly in Heraclitus' eyes the *logos* of the structure and operations of the cosmos. But all nonetheless succeed in masking the broader possibility that for Heraclitus the real, or, more precisely, the real in its rational aspect, could have been conceived of as actually *uttering*, analogously to a human rational agent, on a cosmic scale and everlastingly a (true) account of its own structure and operations that is periodically and no doubt imperfectly captured in language by people like Heraclitus.

Heraclitus' major locutions for the real in its rational, and specifically directive aspect are "that which is wise" *(to sophon),* described as being "set apart from all" (fr. 108) and "(that) one thing, the only wise thing, (which) is unwilling and willing to be called by the name Zeus" (fr. 32); other apparent locutions are "thunderbolt" (fr. 64), "fire" (fr. 66), "war" (fr. 53), and possibly "Time"/"lifetime" *(Aion,* fr. 52) and "God" (fr. 67). The images are varied, and leave open the question of whether Heraclitus considered the real *qua* rational to be an external or an immanent feature of things. If, as seems likely from the divergent directions in which his varied word usage leads us, he was in fact undecided in his own mind on the matter or felt that to opt for one or other possibility was to oversimplify, he joins of course an illustrious group of thinkers.

That the real *qua* rational is conceived of by Heraclitus as eternally uttering an account of itself seems clear from his understanding of *logos* concerning the real as something to which one *listens* (fr. 50, where the reference may be to the *logos* of Heraclitus himself, to that of the real *qua* rational, or to both), and from his remarks about the inadequacy of sight and hearing if one's soul is *barbaros (*fr. 107*)*. While the latter statement could certainly be interpreted simply to mean that souls very often fail to understand the language of the senses, a richer sense encompassing and subsuming this seems to me

obtainable if it is understood as a reference to a distinction between physical perception of the real *qua* physical and that perception of the real *qua* rational which results from an inner listening, with the ears so to speak of the *psyche,* to the *language* of the real *qua* rational which it has in fact had to learn.

That the utterance of the real is prescriptive as well as descriptive seems clear from frs 114 and (possibly) 41. Fragment 114 reads: "Those who <would> speak with insight must base themselves firmly on that which is common to all, as a city does upon <its> law – and much *more* firmly! For all human laws are nourished by one <law>, the divine <law>.[6] For it holds sway to the extent that it wishes, and suffices for all, and is still left over".

The "common" law in question seems to be a reference to what we would perhaps call the Laws of Nature, here startlingly – and for the first time that I know of in Greek thought – proclaimed as the basis for human conduct. Like the word *logos, nomos* ("law") too is a very appropriate term to use if one is committed to the view that the real speaks a language that describes its own structure and operations. Unlike *logos,* however, it has the further advantage of carrying overtones of prescriptiveness as well, thereby reinforcing the point that Heraclitus is at pains to make in being itself a powerful instance of a one of his favourite theses – that the density of language itself can very frequently be an indicator of the density of the real and its operations.[7] A further instance of the same thesis may perhaps be found in fragment 41, where the "plan" *(gnome)* – if this is the correct translation[8] – that it is wise (on our part) to know could be construed both descriptively as the Laws of Nature and prescriptively as those same laws viewed as the basis for human conduct – as a plan, so to speak, for us.[9]

Part of the process whereby we come to understand the real's account of itself (or its laws, or its plan) – but a part that is on its own inadequate (a "poor witness") – is the application of our senses of sight and hearing, and especially sight, to the structure and operations of the world about us. What these senses will tell us, like the witness who can offer us some sort of description of the murderer but has no notion of the broader socio-economic context in which the murderer lives which might offer a reason why the murder was committed, is on occasion accurate enough as far as it goes, but will never get us be-

yond descriptions of a world of variety and change and obvious connections (fr. 54) to a description of that more significant, unified world of *un*obvious connections that tends to lie concealed (fr. 123). The same sentiment underlies his sulfurous remarks (frs 40, 129) on the mere *polymathie* – as distinct from *noos* – of such supposed guides to understanding as Hesiod, Pythagoras, Xenophanes and Hecataeus. What such thinkers, he is claiming, will forever fail to appreciate, given the basically sense-bound, cairn-building approach to knowledge that they adopt, is that there is an essential nature or "real constitution" *(physis)* to things (frs 1, 123) that is to be perceived by some faculty other than the physical senses. This faculty is the *psyche* (fr. 107), and the activity of consciousness involved in its perception of individual *physeis,* or of that *physis* which is the real as a whole, is "insight" or "coming to understanding" (*noein*).

If this is an accurate description of Heraclitus' position, he turns out to be a moderate realist, of the type that John Locke[10] and for that matter Aristotle[11] – despite his criticisms on other counts – would have recognised as a kindred spirit. And the philosophical kinship may be even closer than that, since it is far from obvious that Aristotle's attacks on him as a denier of the principle of non-contradiction are in fact soundly based. As I understand him, Heraclitus has it as part of his goal to use philosophical shock-treatment to get across to a sceptical public the notion that the world's essential unity and changelessness are of greater moment than its real though inconsequential multiplicity and changeability. One way of doing this is to overstate, after the manner of extravagant advertising, features of the real that might lead the reader to this conclusion.

That in so doing he does, *prima facie,* flout the principle of non-contradiction can hardly be denied. But the ease with which his assertions of the supposed "sameness" of various "opposites" (night/day, winter/summer, pure water/foul water, a road up/a road down, etc.) can be understood in terms of perspective, or temporal sequence, or varying effect, or the like, suggests an awareness of this on his part, and with it presumably the hope that his more sophisticated readers will pick up the point and be led by it to see and appreciate his more general claim concerning the basic unity of all things. Strong evidence for this seems to me to be found in fr. 88, where he says:

> "As <one and> the same thing, there is present <in us?> living and dead and the waking and the sleeping and young and old. For the latter, having changed around, are the former, and the former, having changed around, are <back> again <to being> the latter".

Here he not only adds three more to his list of sameness claims, he also – crucially – offers the reader a way of *interpreting* the claims, in these particular instances in terms of temporal sequence. In so doing he effectively refutes, before the fact, Aristotle's assertion that he breaks the law of non-contradiction (x and y are clearly not claimed to be one and the same at the same time and in the same respect), and also presents us with a good reason for believing that he expected his readers to interpret the rest of his sameness claims in some analogous fashion. This may perhaps account for the fact that the same Aristotle who on a number of occasions so roundly accuses Heraclitus of breaking the law of non-contradiction on another occasion (having read his author more carefully?) expresses himself with considerably more caution on the matter.[12]

A further reason for believing that Heraclitus wished his readers to think of the real *qua* rational as everlastingly uttering an account of its structure and operations is to be found in his more general notion, common to the period, that the real is in fact alive. In his own words (fr. 30):

> "<The ordered?> world, the same for all, no god or man made, but it always was, is, and will be, an ever-living fire, being kindled in measures and being put out in measures".

Fiery in its nature, the real manifests rationality because of the intrinsic rationality, claims Heraclitus, of fire itself. This is nowhere more apparent than in the case of the human soul, which is at its least rational when wet (fr. 117; cf. frs 36, [77]) and at its most rational and good when dry (fr. 118). The ultimate in dryness, for humans, is attained by the soul of the warrior who dies in battle (frs 24, 25) and is transformed into a guardian-*daemon* (fr. 63) – that is, into an everlasting demi-god composed of fire.

On this account, human soul operates on a spectrum ranging from a damp, watery state of irrationality to the dry, airy state that is the maximum rationality humans ever reach to the driest of all states, that of pure fire, which is the state of the highest possible rationality of all, attained only by humans who have passed on to some super-human

condition in a life beyond. Do any of these states have cosmic analogues? There is a case for saying they do.

While Heraclitus at no point refers specifically to the *psyche* of the cosmos, fragment 45 seems to be nonetheless an oblique reference to it:

> "One would never by journeying[13] discover the limits of soul, should one traverse every road – so deep a measure (*logos)* does it possess".

The same can be said of fragment 36, with its clear suggestion that surrounding us (and within us as breath) is that soul-stuff of the world which as air has its origins in water. This soul, so large in its extent, like Anaximander's *apeiron* or the *aer* of Anaximenes, that its limits can never be tracked down, is presumably rational as well as alive, in the way that human soul is thought by Heraclitus – and apparently *first* thought by Heraclitus[14] – to be rational and alive. But if this is the case, what is to prevent the possibility that it will *express* that rationality in some fashion analogous to our own way of doing so, that is, in some cosmic equivalent to speech?

A hint of this may possibly be found in a further level of interpretation of fragment 36 in terms of the immensity of soul's rational power as well as physical extent. It is a power no human can ever hope to measure, whatever techniques of investigation one brings to bear, "so profound *(bathys)*[15] *a logos* does it (soul) possess". At this level the term *logos* may well carry a connotation even closer than does "measure" to its focal meaning of "statement" or "account". And if it does, we are looking at a remarkable statement, by Heraclitus, in which he both affirms the existence of cosmic speech and comments on its nature.

The nature of *noos* ("coming to understanding") can now perhaps be clarified. Using as indispensable, though not fully trustworthy, tools of investigation the senses of sight and hearing in particular, the human soul *qua* rational comes eventually to learn the language of the soul of the real *qua* rational, and as a consequence to understand the account of its structure and operations that it never ceases to put forth, the way a stellar source uninterruptedly emits radio-waves. It is the communication of *psyche* with *psyche,* of like with like, and powerfully exemplifies what Empedocles will later canonize as a fundamental principle of the real.

Though it was the Stoics who claimed Heraclitus as their precursor, it was in fact Plato, it seems to me, who, wittingly or unwittingly, produced in the pages of the *Timaeus* a cosmic psychology that most exactly catches the spirit and even letter of Heraclitus' system, despite a number of differences in matters of detail. According to Timaeus' description, World Soul is rational, and is everlastingly uttering *voiceless and soundless discourse* (*logos...aneu phthongou kai eches,* 37b3–6) concerning the world of sense, discourse on its part invariably involving "judgments and beliefs that are sure and true" (37b8). This cosmic discourse is accessible only to one who understands the language in which it is couched, and an indispensable condition for such learning is the observation of "stars, sun and sky, day and night, months and revolving years, equinox and solstice" (47a4–6).

Such observation, he goes on, "has caused the invention of number and bestowed on us the notion of time and the study of the nature of the world; whence we have derived all philosophy, than which no greater boon has ever come or shall come to mortal man as a gift from heaven" (47a6-b2). The significant word here is perhaps "number", in that it seems to constitute Plato's attempt to bridge the epistemological gap between physical observation of the world and the "coming to an understanding", to use Heraclitus' term, of the nature of the broader structure and operations of that world. For with a knowledge of "number" we become aware that, if the language of the real can be likened to anything, it is to the language of mathematics.[16]

Empedocles' principle, it should be added, still operates. Aided by a knowledge of mathematics, we come to understand that the revolutions of the stars and planets are *rational* revolutions, and that if we are to further understand what, in operating the way they do, they *say* about themselves and the world we must "acquire the power to *compute* them rightly according to nature" (47c2). In this way we finally lock on to the wavelength of rationality on which, as components of rational World Soul, they operate, and as a consequence begin to "reproduce (in our own souls) the perfectly unerring revolutions of the god and reduce to settled order the wandering motions in ourselves" (47c2–4).

It may be viewed as a matter of some irony that, for all Heraclitus' ridicule of Pythagoras, it is in fact a basic insight of Pythagoras or of one of his *epigonoi* – the role of "number" in the real – that Plato uses

to reinforce and spell out in detail what is ultimately involved in asserting that the real speaks a language. Thus reinforced, the notion has served as a powerful source of cosmological inquiry and on occasion inspiration (as in the case of Einstein)[17] ever since.

Notes

1 See, e. g., M. L. West, *Early Greek Philosophy and the Orient* (Oxford 1971) pp. 124–129; Jonathan Barnes, *The Presocratic Philosophers* (London 1979) p. 59.

2 G. S. Kirk, *Heraclitus. The Cosmic Fragments* (Cambridge 1954) p. 38, suggests that the senses "reckoning", "measure" and "proportion" are a group of meanings stemming from the root *leg–* that are "just as primary" as the sense "account" or "discourse", but this seems to be to set up a false dichotomy. *All* of the meanings in question surely have as their basic root the notion of "picking out" or "choosing" of a set of words to form a proposition; it is after that stage that we can effectively distinguish senses involving words (e. g., "statement", "account", "discourse") and senses not necessarily involving words but *expressible* in words if need be (e. g., "formula", "proportion", "measure").

3 *Op. cit.* (above, n.2) p. 37.

4 See especially frs 1, 28, 48, 50, 113, 114, and the comments in T. M. Robinson, *Heraclitus. Fragments* (Toronto 1987) p. 5.

5 Embedded in the notion of choice that underlies the term (see above, n.2) is of course the implication that the chooser is endowed with reason (all instances we have of the word *legein* used in such a sense predictably have as their grammatical subject gods or humans), so it comes as no surprise when "reason" eventually manifests itself as a meaning for *logos*. But there is no evidence I know of for thinking such a sense had emerged at the time Heraclitus was writing; the earliest use of the word in such a sense (if the word is being correctly translated) is in Leucippus, fr. 2 DK: "Nothing occurs at random, but everything occurs for a reason *(ek logou)* and by necessity".

6 C. H. Kahn *(The Art and Thought* of *Heraclitus* [Cambridge 1979] *ad loc.)* interprets the phrase "one <law>, the divine <law>" somewhat differently, reading it simply as "a divine one" and laying stress on what he perceives as a witting ambiguity on Heraclitus' part between "the divine law" and "the supreme cosmic principle". But the

ambiguity appears merely syntactical, rather than systematic; see my comments in "Methodology in the Reading of Heraclitus" (*Ionian Philosophy,* ed. K. J. Boudouris [Athens 1989]) p. 348.

7 For another excellent example of the thesis see fr. 48 ("the bow's name is life but its job is death!"), with its exploitation of the different meanings of *bios* ("bow" and "life"), depending on accentuation.

8 My tentative understanding of the term in this context is as the conceptual counterpart, on the part of "that which is wise" (fr. 32), of the *logos* it everlastingly utters in description of itself. "Plan" would certainly serve as a reasonable translation were the prescriptive nature of that *logos* the subject of discussion, but the apparent reference (despite the slightly garbled text) to the "steering of all things through all things" suggests that it is its descriptive aspect that Heraclitus has wholly or primarily in mind, and "plan" (or as some would – more overtly – translate, "purpose") perhaps carries teleological overtones that are not clearly justifiable. I tentatively leave it as a translation, on the understanding that it be understood as the equivalent of something like conceptual blueprint or map, by reference to which, etc.

9 I say "perhaps", because part of this fragment is textually problematic, and because "plan" is less clearly the correct translation than I once thought. If *gnomen* could be construed as an internal accusative (Kahn) there might be a case for translating it "insight" here rather than "plan", but I can find no parallel for such a use of *epistasthai* with an internal accusative. On the other hand, I now think that my own earlier translation (1987) of the phrase failed to alert the Greek-less reader to the fact that in Heraclitus' phrase there is no definite article with *gnomen.* For that reason I would now translate "knowing <the?> plan" rather than "knowing the plan", and for further caveats on the actual translation "plan" refer the reader to n. 8 above.

10 See Barnes, *op. cit.* (above, n.2) p. 77, on the affinity between the empiricism of Heraclitus and that of Locke. A recent criticism of Barnes' view by Georges J. D. Moyal ("The Unexpressed Rationalism of Heraclitus", *Revue de Philosophie Ancienne* 7.2 [1989] pp. 185–198) seems to me partly misplaced. The *physis* (or *physeis)* of things revealed by the *logos* spoken by the real indeed "cannot be given in sense-experience" *(art. cit.,* p. 187), but Locke – as distinct from Hume – would have fully agreed with this; the "empiricism and sensa-

tionalism" Barnes attributes to him (i. e., to Locke) is precisely one which combines a belief in both sense-perception and insight into essences as steps towards knowledge. On the other hand, Moyal is certainly right in suggesting that there is *more* to Heraclitean epistemology than a commitment to Locke-style empiricism and sensationalism. What this is I would myself see as insight into, or "coming to understanding" *(noos)* of, not simply essences, but the overall "plan" or conceptual map by reference to which the world *qua* rational everlastingly utters its self-descriptive *logos*.

11 Barnes, *ibid.*, p. 81.

12 For the claim that Heraclitus flouts the law of non-contradiction see *Physics* A2, 185b19 ff., *Topics* 5, 159b30 ff., *Metaphysics* 7, 1012a24; for the more cautious statement see *Metaphysics* 3, 1005b23.

13 The participle *ion* (overlooked in my translation of 1987) is here belatedly acknowledged.

14 See C. H. Kahn, *op. cit.* (above, n. 6), p. 127.

15 Evidence for such a meaning for the adjective *bathys* in near-contemporary literature is not difficult to find. Aeschylus talks of a *phrontis* that is such *(Supp.* 407), Pindar of a *phren (Nem.* 4.8) and a *merimna* (*Ol.* 2.60). Given the basic meanings of *bathys* as "deep" or "high", depending on one's position, a translation "lofty" could well be appropriate, and as such is stirringly echoed by Einstein across a gap of two and a half millennia (see below, n. 17).

16 The notion has since become part of our heritage. One of its strongest affirmations is to be found in Galileo, who follows the variant metaphor of a book rather than oral utterance: "Philosophy is written in this great book (by which I mean the universe) which stands always open to our view, but it cannot be understood unless one first learns to comprehend the language and interpret the symbols in which it is written, and its symbols are triangles, circles, and other geometric figures, without which it is not humanly possible to comprehend even one word of it; without these one wanders in a dark labyrinth" (*Il Saggiatore* [Rome 1623], tr. Stillman Drake [in *Discoveries and Opinions of Galileo,* Doubleday Anchor Books, Garden City, NY, 1957] pp. 237–238).

17 Like Heraclitus (and Spinoza), Einstein seems to have equated God and Nature, and like Heraclitus he was satisfied that the *logos* or

utterance of God/Nature can be meaningfully described in terms of Laws of Nature. He was also convinced that, in Heraclitean terms, that which is unwilling and willing to be called by the name Zeus is, though subtle, not unwilling to reveal his/its secrets to the patient enquirer who has learned the appropriate language (fr. 107; cf. frs 18, 35, 46, 55, 101a, 123). In Pais's words: "His (Einstein's) realism and his optimism are illuminated by his remark: 'Subtle is the lord, but malicious He is not'"("Raffiniert ist der Herrgott aber boshaft ist er nicht"). When asked by a colleague what he meant by that, he replied: "Nature hides her secret because of her essential loftiness, but not by means of ruse" ("Die Natur verbirgt ihr Geheimnis durch die Erhabenheit ihres Wesens, aber nicht durch List") (Abraham Pais, *Subtle is the Lord*: *The Science and the Lore* of *Albert Einstein* [Oxford 1982] p. vi). (I am grateful for this reference and that found in n. 16 above to Professor Kent Peacock.)

5. Parmenides on the Real in its Totality

In a recent article[1] I attempted to show in some detail how Parmenides' poem treats of ascertainment and the Real. I return to the argument here, and try to draw out some philosophical implications. Translations are in all cases my own; for a defence of them the reader is referred to my earlier article.

1. The Argument

There are, says Parmenides' goddess (fragments 2–3), two and only two "routes of enquiry" ascertainable: (a) the one route, to the effect that (or how) whatever the poem turns out to be talking about is real and needs must be real and (b) the other route to the effect that (or how) whatever the poem turns out to be talking about is not real and needs must not be real. The second route is written off as "wholly unthinkable", on the grounds that "one would not be able to reach a knowledge of what is not real or pick it out in words" *(phrazein)*. For "getting to know *(noein)* and being real are the same thing" (fr. 3) (or: "for the same thing is there for getting to know and being real"). At this early stage of the poem the subject of "is" *(esti)* need not be spelled out; as the poem continues, it will become clear that it is "whatever there is" or "whatever is real" (8.3 and *passim)*. Even if it be inserted, there is no need to worry about a tautology *(pace* Owen [I] 55); the subtlety of the conjunctions introducing the "is" *(esti)* route lies precisely in their ability to be translated "how" as well as "that" (Mourelatos 49 ff.) – in other words their ability to express the *mode* of existence of the real as well as (or rather than) simply its existence, and fragment 8 is, of course, precisely such a description of the mode of the real's existence. One can pass over for the moment the question of the exact translation of *esti* (it will be discussed in connection with fragment 8) but not the translation of *noein,* which I follow von Fritz and Kahn in taking as a verb of *ascertainment,* rather than a verb of mere thinking; I see no reason to believe that Parmenides intended to include mermaids and unicorns in the real, and reject as a misunderstanding Owen's contraposition "what can be spoken and *thought of is* real" ([I] 73, note 49) (my italics), while gratefully ac-

knowledging the value of the contraposition as such for the understanding of Parmenides' argument. For by direct application of contraposition we can see clearly (a) what the subject of *esti* almost certainly is, even before the clarification of fragment 8, and (b) how Parmenides is laying down the simplest and firmest epistemological foundation he can for what he intends to say about the real. The "law", along with the rejection of the "is not" route, is corroborated by fragment 3, whether one understands it in terms of "necessary interconnectedness" or "candidacy" for the title "real" (and *eo ipso* "knowable"). The same fragment 3, in conjunction with the opening lines of fragment 6, also offers a second reason why the "is not" route is barred: "necessarily, what is there to pick out *(legein)* and ascertain is real; for it is *there* to *be* real, whereas *nothing* is not".

The claims for the "is not" route having been refuted (7.5; see Furley 9), Parmenides is free to describe the only remaining route (8.2), i.e., the "is" route. The subject of the fragment, which I translate "the real" (see 8.3 and *passim)* seems to me analyzable in six possible ways, three involving a distributive and three a collective understanding of the noun *to eon:* (a) whatever is p; (b) whatever is the case; (c) whatever is real; (d) all that is collectively p; (e) all that is collectively the case; (f) all that is collectively real.

The first possibility involves a predicative understanding of the "is" route. But even if such a use of the unflagged *esti* had a linguistic parallel, it is hard to see what sense it would make in the present context. Understanding it to mean, "anything qualified is, *qua* entity *tout court,* ungenerated, imperishable, whole, unique, continuous, immovable/unchangeable, limited (?), complete, sphere-like, equal to itself, and 'inviolable'", the assertion seems too obviously counterfactual to merit further investigation. The second possibility, which owes its origin to Kahn's celebrated account of the "veridical" sense of the verb "to be", has a greater *prima facie* plausibility, at least insofar as *some* of the above epithets are concerned. An instance of "anything that is the case" can be seen, for example, as imperishable (if it is an historical event, for example, or an axiom of Euclidean geometry), unchangeable, complete (in the sense of "completed"), and unique. What sense can be made of the other epithets, however, is hard to see. The third possibility, which trades on the standard acceptance of *einai* in the poem as basically existential/locative in its import, must like (a) be

understood to mean "anything that is real *is* – *qua* real – ungenerated", etc. But its weakness, as in the case of (b), is that at best a handful of the epithets ascribed to the real in fragment 8 can really be said to apply to it.

What of the "collective" possibilities? All have the common merit of taking into account the fact that the poem talks constantly of the real "in its totality" *(pan;* see, e.g., 8.5, 8.22, 8.24, 8.25, 8.43, 8.48). Individually, they are of varying degrees of plausibility. To take interpretation (d) first. With "all that is collectively p" (in the sense of "all that collectively exists in some qualified manner") as subject, we have the following: "all that collectively exists in some qualified manner *is* – *qua* reality *tout court* – ungenerated, etc." This interpretation clearly has more going for it than has interpretation (a). The *sum total* of things, *qua* reality *only,* can to the degree that it is simply *real* be with little difficulty seen as ungenerated *(ex nihilo nihil fit),* imperishable (by the converse of the preceding principle), whole (i.e., it is the totality of what is), unique, unchangeable/immovable, complete, continuous (i.e., entities *qua* entities – assuming for the moment that individual entities could in fact be distinguished within the real – will be separated from one another by further entities; there are no bits of blank nonentity in the real; cf. 8.23–25), "equal to itself" (i.e., there are no *degrees* of reality in the real; *qua* real, all entities are of equal "weight" and distribution, so to speak, within the whole), and "inviolable" (i.e., there is nothing – in the sense of no "reality" – "outside of" the real to disturb its quiescence *ab extra).* (I pass over for the moment the questions of the real's supposed "limitedness" and sphere-like nature.) The fifth interpretation is, like (d), superior to the earlier, distributive interpretation (i.e., [b] above). Understood as "the sum total of what is the case" the real could indeed with some ingenuity be described in the way Parmenides describes it in fragment 8. But it means taking a great deal of what Parmenides says in a highly figurative fashion, and this tack should it seems to me be adopted only when all else fails.

The sixth interpretation is surely the most plausible, possessing as it appears to do all the merits of the fourth without commitment to the dubious assumption that the unflagged *esti* might itself suggest anything other than the collective reality of things. With "all that is collectively real" as subject we have the following: "all that is collectively real *is* – *qua* real – ungenerated, etc." In answering the question,

"What can be ascertained and pointed to in words?" Parmenides has in effect concluded: *"Reality as a whole"*. Such reality, as becomes clear from 8.38–40 (reading *onomastai,* with Simplicius; a reading accepted also by Woodbury and Mourelatos), is co-extensive with what mortals, in talking of a variegated universe, mistakenly *take to be* the real – though not *wholly* mistakenly; the names given to apparent features of the universe by mortals point, however obliquely, *to* the real, and in fragment 16 Parmenides offers a physiological account of how and why mortals differ from one another in their appreciation of this fact. That the real *is* co-extensive with what others call the cosmos seems clear from references to its "limits" (8.31, 8.42, 8.49) and to the likening of its "completedness from all sides" to "the bulk (or: expanse) of a well-rounded ball". In spite of strenuous efforts by commentators in recent years (notably Tarán, *ad loc*., Owen [I] 66, Stokes 140) to explain these references figuratively they seem to me still most naturally taken literally as a reference to a limited, spheroid reality.

To the objection that Parmenides must have seen that such a view would involve the illicit assumption of the "existence" of something – if only something "non-real" – "outside of" the real (see, e.g., Stokes 140) one can reply that the objection is based upon a misunderstanding of Parmenides' intentions in the poem. At 8.24, for example, *pan* is not the subject of the sentence but stands rather in apposition to the subject, which is of course "the real": "the real, *taken in its totality,* is full of what is real". And at 6.1–2 Parmenides is merely barred from crediting the non-real with "existence" such that it could ever be the object of "ascertainment and description" (2.7–8); *as such* it is of course not even a possible starter (6.2). As for 8.36–37, this too can hardly count as evidence: non-reality is precisely *not* a "thing" such that it can be counted among the putative entities that the goddess rejects as possible objects of ascertainment and description other than the real, for such putative entities "exist" or "will exist" (8.36), and non-reality of course does not (6.2). The fact of the matter is that the non-real *could well* play a role in *delimiting* the real – provided one avoids the trap of ever saying that the non-real *esti,* or could ever be "descried or described" (2.7–8) in the way that the *real – and only* the real – can. (Compare Plato *Resp*. 478bc, where the non-real, while far from being a possible object of knowledge, is nonetheless classified as the [quasi-] *object* of *non*-knowledge.)

To the further objection, "But why *limited?"* one can safely reply that Parmenides found it inconceivable that a reality which was for him self-evidently "complete", or "perfect" (8.4, reading *teleston, vel sim.,* with Tarán), and under the control of *Ananke*, *Themis* and *Dike* (8.30, 8.32, 8.14), could ever be limitless in extent, for limitlessness implies lack of completion (see 8.31–33: reality has no need of anything further; therefore it is "complete"; and furthermore it is precisely such "completion" that *accounts for* [see 8.32, *houneka]* its being "encircled" – note the verb! – by "bonds of limit"). The encircler is, not surprisingly, said to be *Ananke*; to Parmenides' way of thinking the limited nature of the real follows "necessarily" from its completion.

If this understanding of the Way of Truth is correct, then the Way of Opinion can be accounted for in terms of *de facto,* though unappreciated, reference. Mortals, in using the cosmological language they do, have as the common referent of such language *the real as a whole* (it has, of course, no parts); their mistake is to think that they actually *ascertain* the real (8.39), when in fact all they possess are misleading – though not wholly misleading – "opinions" that in some way unbeknownst to most of them *point to* the real.

2. Some Implications

Not the least interesting and exciting feature of Parmenides' poem is what is (wittingly or unwittingly) implied, rather than what is said, and what avenues his views have opened up to further exploration. The clear *general* implication of 2.7–8, for example, is that a sound ontology must go hand in hand with a sound epistemology (an oblique criticism of earlier thinkers in the field?); the *specific* implication is, in Hintikka's words, that "m knows that p entails p". Though Parmenides thinks that ascertainment has as its intentional object that *entity* which is uniquely real (suggesting that Parmenides is, along with many others, what has been called a "thing-ontologist"), he is also, it seems, committed to the view that ascertainment is equally importantly involved with (a) states of affairs and (b) the description of such states of affairs in the form of true propositions (suggesting that he is at least as much a "fact ontologist" as a "thing ontologist", if only in the restricted sense that, as far as he is concerned, the only facts there are are facts concerning a single entity – the uniquely real). In his own

words (8.34–36): "ascertaining <the real> and ascertaining *that* <the real> *is* <real> is one and the same <process>. For you will not find <an instance of> ascertainment <of the real> without <also> finding <the real> in the <proposition> in which <such ascertainment> is affirmed".[2] Such a move leads directly, of course, to Platonism, at any rate in the short term. Genuine ascertainment is such precisely because its intentional object is the uniquely real (read: the Forms); and what true propositions affirm is the genuineness of states of affairs *concerning* the uniquely real (read again: the Forms). All else is *doxa* – *"opinion",* which will at best achieve what little truth the deficient ontological status of its objects will tolerate, but never that truth which goes hand in hand with ascertainment of the real. In the long term it leads to fact ontology in its own right, untrammelled by models of ascertainment involving the non-physical seeing, or touching of, or sexual congress with (cf. *Resp.* 490ab) putatively extra-mental, non-physical entities.

In the matter of logic Parmenides has apparently sensed the value both of contraposition in philosophical argument (compare 2.7–8 and the subject of 8), and of exclusive disjunction (see especially 8.15–16). More importantly, perhaps, he has apparently sensed the critical difference between the logic of wholes and the logic of parts, with large-scale implications for Platonic metaphysics and cosmology in the short term, and contemporary cosmology and logic in the long term. In the short term, it is of importance to Greek cosmological and metaphysical speculation that he has sensed that that which is describable as the *totality* of the real cannot for that very reason be said to collect a history in the way that the supposed "parts" thereof (as imagined by mortals; in truth the real as a totality is continuous, and therefore partless) collect histories. For collecting a history involves change, and change is contextual; but the *totality* of the real is by definition context-free. He has, to put it differently, sensed that the notion of a temporal mode of existence cannot meaningfully be ascribed to the *totality* of the real; at best (and very darkly) such a totality can be described as existing in a state of "presentness" *(nun,* 8.5) without beginning or end (8.3), given the assumption that the concepts of past and future introduce, illicitly, the non-real into the real (8.6 ff.). In the *Timaeus* Plato picks up the idea and uses it to describe the existence of the world of Forms (37e-38a); the germ of an idea in Parmenides has

now blossomed into the concept of "eternity", and will begin a particularly illustrious career when posited by Aristotle as the manner of existence of the Prime Mover. In the long term Parmenides' doctrine has two further major implications for logical and linguistic theory: (a) by extrapolation it can be argued that the logic of wholes and the logic of parts are different from one another *whatever* the philosophical topic under discussion, and knowledge of this fact will prove to be one of the greatest safeguards against two of the commonest fallacies in philosophy, namely those of Composition and Division; and (b) "what is the case" can no more be said to have a temporal mode of existence than can "what is real". In suggesting that genuine ascertainment is of what will later be called the eternally existent Parmenides has come to the very verge of the understanding that a true existential proposition is *atemporally* such. A hint of this, it seems to me, can be found at 8.34–36: the *present tense* of the participial phrase "the real (= apparently "the true": see above, note 1), like the present tense used of the phrase "the real" in the sense of "the unique entity", is the best that grammar can do to convey the notion of that which is, in Owen's phrase ([2] 271), logically tenseless. It is, as need hardly be pointed out, at best a hint and very possibly not something sensed by Parmenides himself; but with such inspired gropings does serious philosophical progress begin.

Notes

1 "Parmenides on Ascertainment of the Real", *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 4.4 (1975) 623–633.

2 It will be noticed that my evidence in this matter is drawn from 8.34–37. I see no good reason for understanding *esti itself* in the poem as meaning (among other things) "(it) is the case", such that the Way of Truth will invariably involve propositions describing "what is the case", and the Forbidden Way propositions describing what is not the case. The same is generally true for the noun *to eon* ("the real"), as I have tried to show above. The veridical sense, does, however, come close to the surface at 8.35: what one finds in a true proposition is "the real" in the sense presumably of "the truth" (cf. Plato, *Resp.* 389c, where *ta onta legein* = "to say what is true"). For the possible implications of this see the concluding remarks of this study.

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* This is a list simply of the books and articles that I found most useful in preparing the present study; it makes no claims to comprehensiveness.

6. Parmenides on Coming-to-Know the Real

By common consent, Parmenides is the key philosophical figure in Greece antecedent to Socrates. Yet the exact nature of his claims continues to be a matter of great dispute and puzzlement. To survey the vast literature on the matter would be the subject of a book in itself. For the moment I shall simply offer the thoughts that I myself have had on his poem over the past two decades. Appended to the paper are set of my translations of various sections of Parmenides' poem. These I shall examine in turn. During the examination it will become clear where I stand on what I think Parmenides is trying to say. After that I shall attempt to draw some conclusions on the effect, as I see it, of Parmenides' thought on the development of western philosophical thinking in the realms of logic, epistemology, metaphysics, and the philosophy of science.

1. In attempting to understand the two routes that are "available for our ascertaining" (on the concept of "ascertainment" – *noesis* – more later) we are struck at once by the ambiguity of the conjunction *hopos*; is the account to be about the *existence* of a state of affairs (where *hopos* means "that") or about the *manner* of existence of a state of affairs (where *hopos* means "how"), or possibly both? As far as the rest of the sentence is concerned, I understand the three open possibilities for the translation of the verb *einai* to be existential, locative, and veridical. (The "predicative" possibility seems to me highly unlikely without the use of either an explicit predicate or a placeholder such as *ti* or *poion ti)*. Since it is at this early stage unclear what exactly the poem is going to be discussing, we are I think under some obligation to leave all three possibilities open. My first translation does this explicitly; the second opens up the further possibility that Parmenides may also be talking about the routes not simply as pointers indicating the existence/availability/factuality of something but as pointers which themselves get verbalized in propositional form.

2. Let us leave on one side for the moment the strange-looking phrase "cannot not-be" (2.3); we shall return to the topic a little later. After outlining his two routes, Parmenides proceeds to point out that one of them, the "is-not" route, is "wholly unlearnable" (2.6). The phrase is again opaque at this early stage of the poem, though we shall

I think be able to return to it eventually and see that its exact import is "wholly unable ever to become an object of *knowledge*".

I turn instead to lines 7 to 8, where a reason – and clearly a reason of critical importance – is offered for the problematic status of the "is-not" route: such a route is or involves "that which is not real (does not exist/is not there/is not the case)" and cannot be pointed to. Let us examine these statements. The first is, on the face of it, an impeccable and incontrovertible piece of basic epistemological reasoning: if x is not real (does not exist/is not there/is not the case) it cannot be known, and, by contraposition, the knowable is that which is real (what exists/is there/is the case). And two conclusions might quickly be drawn from it, one of them highly likely, the other somewhat more dubious. The first is that the subject of the poem will very likely turn out to be what has emerged from the contrapositive statement, i. e., "that which is real *(to eon)"*. The second is that the second route is in fact an unreal route, a possibility dreamed up for didactic purposes by the poet but, like Wittgenstein's ladder, discardable once it has served its purpose as a pseudo-alternate introduced into the equation for purposes of understanding-by-contrast. This is for the moment certainly to be left open as a possibility, but my introductory statement "is or involves" will make it clear that I think there is an alternate interpretation of the phrase that should be kept in mind as well. It has to do with the status of apparent sameness-claims in Parmenides (in this case the apparent claim that the "is-not" route and what-is-not-real [does not exist/is not there/is not the case] are one and the same), and for clarification on this we need to turn to the next line of the poem, which is fragment 3.

3. The line is, prima facie, a sameness-claim, or, even more strongly, an identity-claim, and this is how I myself understand it, while acknowledging that the infinitive *noein* could possibly be being employed here in its well-authenticated "dativa1" sense. So I translate "for ascertaining and being real (existing/being there/being the case) are one and the same", while conceding that in grammatical terms an equal possibility (and one that finishes up making the same point, though less dramatically) could be "for the same thing is there for ascertaining and being real (existing/being the case)". My reason for this is that there is strong evidence, as it seems to me, for believing that at least one other philosopher of the day – Heraclitus – was quite happy

to express statements of necessary interconnectedness in terms of apparent identity, and in one fragment (88) to clarify exactly what he was doing, just in case anyone was misunderstanding him. If I am right in this claim, there is a strong (and – in philosophical terms – potentially very fruitful) possibility that Parmenides is following the same line of thought, in hopes of producing the same arresting impression on *his* readers as Heraclitus had no doubt produced on his. The meaning of the sentence will in such a case be, not "to ascertain and to be real (existent etc.) are identical" but rather "to ascertain and to be real (existent etc.) are *necessarily interconnected*". This is again a point to which I shall be returning.

For the moment however I wish to turn to my translation of *noein* in terms of ascertainment. In so doing I am following von Fritz (who is in turn followed in large measure by Kahn, and more recently, though with a number of caveats, by Lesher), for whom the verb is very frequently if not indeed in the majority of extant instances a verb of *coming-to-know* in early Greek. In view of this I take it to be a sound hermeneutical principle always to test to see whether, in context, this is the more plausible interpretation of the verb before opting for the more vague translation "think". And applying such a principle, I find that the translation "ascertain" (i. e., come-to-know) is almost uniformly throughout the poem the one that makes excellent sense of Parmenides' argument, in a way that "think" does not. In the present case (fr. 3), Parmenides seems to be laying down as a firm logical/epistemological principle, before getting to the heart of his main argument, the fact that there is a necessary connection between my ascertaining that p and p, a point already foreshadowed at 2. 7–8 in the contrapositive statement "if x is real (existent etc.) it can come to be known)" (*gignoskein* and *noein* are in fact near-synonymous terms).

4. The point is re-iterated forcefully at 6.1. Again, as in fr. 3, Parmenides appears to express himself arrestingly in terms of what appears to be a sameness-statement; though once more I must concede that in grammatical terms the dativ al use of the infinitive cannot be discounted. So my first translation is "picking out and ascertaining must be what is real (exists etc.)", and my second – basing itself on the dativ al use of the infinitive – "what is there for picking out and ascertaining must be real (exist etc.)". As in the case of fr. 3, I interpret the

apparent over-claim on Parmenides' part as being in fact the perfectly respectable logical/epistemological claim that there is a necessary connection between the picking out and ascertaining of x and x's being real (existing etc.), or that, to put it in hypothetical propositional form, "if x can be picked out and ascertained, then x is real (exists etc.)".

It will be noticed that I am also translating *legein* here in its primitive sense of "picking out". In so doing I am exploring the possibility that Parmenides has in mind something like "picking out in words", in much the same way *phrazein* at 2.8 seems to mean "point out in words". In so writing Parmenides seems to be coming very close to affirming the interconnectedness between coming to know p and being able to point out p in words – i. e., either to verbally indicate its presence or even possibly to frame an ostensive definition of it. It is on the face of it an astute and defensible claim, and quite new in Greek philosophy, and I shall return to it in discussing 8. 34–36.

It will be noticed that the supposed modal fallacy that Owen and others have discovered in Parmenides' argument – i. e., in his supposed "*de re* interpretation of a modal statement" [at 6. 1–2] – is on my interpretation no fallacy at all. The fallacy would occur were Parmenides talking of the supposed necessity of the existence of anything *thought* to exist. But Parmenides is talking rather of *knowledge*, not simply thinking, and the causal connection he draws is in fact logically unimpeachable.

5. At 6. 1–2 Parmenides offers a remarkable reason why he is affirming so tight a nexus between ascertainment/pointing out in words and what is real (exists etc.): "for it is *there* to *be* real (exist/be the case), whereas *nothing* is *not* <there>". In so talking, Parmenides seems to be setting up two candidates for the title "real (existent/the case)" in terms of a version of the locative sense of *einai* which we might also call the "availability" sense. One of these candidates has just been described, in the previous sentence, as "what is *there* [i. e., *available*] for picking out and ascertaining"; the other is simply "nothing at all". The latter is of course a pseudo-candidate, the non-existent being *a fortiori* not available, and having served its purpose in highlighting what turns out to be the *only* candidate, it is at once discarded. The philosophical technique is an interesting one, and may also possibly be at work in fr. 2.7–8, as we have noticed. Plato will

later use it in the *Timaeus*, when he mentions the pseudo-possibility of a created model for the universe (as against the other possibility – an eternal, uncreated Form), only to immediately discard such a possibility as unthinkable.

6. In fragment 8 Parmenides finally offers us his own positive account of the (remarkable) epithets of *to eon*. One of these has, as it happens, despite the huge literature, been very much under-discussed, and I should like to address the matter now. As can be seen from my translations of 8.5, 8.11, 8.22 and 8.24, I believe that for Parmenides the real (the existent, etc.) can only be understood if it is seen in its totality (*pan*). The force of this claim rapidly emerges if one looks at the alternate possibility, i. e., the possibility that the poem might be about "what is real (existent, etc.)" in the (grammatically possible) sense of "*any given thing/state of affairs* that is real (existent/the case)". Such a particular thing/state of affairs might, provided we characterize it as being what it is simply *qua* real/the case, rather than *qua* qualified in some way, with some plausibility be characterized as being *some* of the things that *to eon* is called in fragment 8. A *particular* reality simply *qua* real may thus meaningfully be characterized as being whole, continuous, limited, complete, "equal to itself", and – provided this is understood in the sense of "perspectivally neutral" – "sphere-like"; though it could hardly be characterized as being ungenerated, imperishable, unique, or "inviolable". By the same token a particular *state of affairs* and/or the *true proposition affirming it* could also – by extending certain epithets to somewhat unfamiliar boundaries – be characterized as being whole, continuous, limited, complete, and equal to itself, and also indeed imperishable, sphere-like (in our above-defined sense) and inviolable; but, in similar fashion to a particular reality, such a particular state of affairs and/or true proposition affirming it could hardly be characterized as being ungenerated or unique except by a good deal of verbal manipulation and ingenuity.

All things change however once we follow Parmenides's directive and look at the real in its *totality* (*pan*). The two possibilities here are "the sum *total* of what is the *case qua* being simply the case" and "the sum *total* of what *exists qua* simply existent". In the case of the sum total of what is the case, this can be meaningfully described as being whole, continuous, limited, complete, and equal to itself, and also perspectivally neutral, imperishable and inviolable. But again it would be

problematic, as it was in discussing any *single* given state of affairs, to talk of the sum *total* of what is the case as being ungenerated or unique, except by a good deal of ingenuity. In the case of the other possibility , however – that is, "the sum total of what *exists qua* simply existent" – *all* epithets used by Parmenides seem to work perfectly. The sum total of what exists *qua* simply existent can be accurately described as follows:

1. It is whole. For, being everything, it "lacks" nothing (8.34). This goes even for "possibilities", since the notion of "possibly existent" for Parmenides would include the notion of what "is not" *currently* existent; and "is-not" has no place in his schema.

2. It is continuous. For, simply *qua eon*, it lacks quantity and quality, and so, both by the law of the identity of indiscernibles and Parmenides' belief in the impossibility of the existence of *to me on*, will necessarily be homogeneous and continuous.

3. It is limited. For an infinite series is incompatible with the notion of a totality, and any series must be either finite or infinite; *tertium non datur*.

4. It is complete. See on (1) above.

5. It is equal to itself (8.49). The notion goes with that of its being "like the mass of a well-rounded ball". This, it seems to me, can and perhaps ought to be understood both in the sense of "perspectivally neutral" (reading in this instance "from every direction" – *pantothen* – as part of the phrase) – i. e., a spherical object is perceived as such from whatever angle – and also in the sense of what one might call "ontologically spherical" – i. e., it possesses the equivalent in the ontological realm (that is, in the realm which is the object of knowledge) of the sphericity enjoyed by the mass of a well-rounded ball in the world of *doxa*. Since the realm of knowledge and that of *doxa* will, as will become apparent later, turn out to be one and the same, *each* will be seen to be characterized by sphericity, though sphericity as viewed from differing epistemological perspectives. The sphericity of the real as appreciated by *doxa* will be a physical sphericity in space-time, while that of the real as an object of knowledge – i. e., the real *qua* real and in its totality – will be simply the formal character of sphericity, a formal character that transcends either physical sphericity or that status of pure quantity enjoyed by the sphericity which is an object of Euclidean geometry.

6. It is imperishable. For to perish is to change, and change for Parmenides would involve the assertion of the reality of *to me on*, which is impossible.

7. It is inviolable. For violability too involves potential change, which would involve *to me on*, which is impossible; see above.

8. It is ungenerated. For generation also would constitute change, and this would again on any interpretation introduce *to me on*, which is impossible; see again above.

9. It is unique. For the notion of two (or more) *totalities* of what exists is a contradiction in terms.

If this understanding of the central assertions of fragment 8 is correct, we are looking at a profound piece of metaphysical reasoning on Parmenides' part. In response to Xenophanes' challenge, he is saying that knowledge is possible, but that the object of such knowledge is circumscribed, consisting in fact of nothing but the real *qua* real and in its totality. The implications of this remarkable view will be discussed a little later.

7. At 8.34–35 Parmenides makes a further profound move. On the face of it he is claiming that acquaintance-knowledge and propositional knowledge are identical. But, as we have seen, this could simply be a claim of necessary interconnectedness, and as such unimpeachable. *Why* he makes it emerges at once, in lines 35–36. Here Parmenides tells us in effect that knowledge-claims without the ability to verbalize such claims are an impossibility; the two invariably go together. What he has also realized with clarity – and here again he appears to have been the first Greek to have done so – is that a given state of affairs is to be found equally as a feature both of the real and of any true proposition that *affirms* such a state of affairs. The discovery of this state of affairs constitutes "coming to know" or "ascertainment" (*noein*). An example of such a state of affairs would presumably be, given what we have learned so far, "the fact that the real *qua* real and in its totality is unique, continuous and limited".

If this understanding of his argument is correct, Parmenides has clearly noticed that a "vision" theory of knowledge (natural enough in a language in which the verbs "to see" and "to know" have the same root) is not enough; *propositional* knowledge and the ontological status of the contents of such knowledge must also be taken into ac-

count. And the two are so closely linked as to allow him to talk of their identity.

8. As fragment 8 comes to an end, Parmenides turns to the realm of *doxa*. The description will of course be "deceptive" in the way it is set out (8.52) (not "deceitful"; there is no reason to think the goddess is setting out to actively deceive); it will after all be treating of a world that will never be anything other than the object of opinion. But the deceptiveness is not lethal. On the contrary, the description will be structured in a way that will produce a *plausible*, not an *im*plausible picture (8.60).

The point seems to me a critical one, given the tendency among some commentators to think of the Way of Seeming as wholly bogus, and treating of a world which for Parmenides does not exist. In fact, the truth seems to be the very antithesis of this. For Parmenides there is a single reality. Seen from the perspective of *noesis* (i.e., seen *qua* simply real and in its totality) it has the features laid out in fragment 8. Seen from the perspective of *doxa* (i. e., seen through the physical senses), it has all the sorts of features mentioned by earlier presocratics; those mentioned in fragments 9 to 19 are in all likelihood Parmenides' own views on the matter, drawn in large measure from what others have said before him. The difference between the two perspectives is that the first produces knowledge and the second merely opinion. There are, however, opinions and opinions, some being more plausible than others. And the set of opinions constituting fragments 9 to 19 is clearly affirmed to be of the "plausible" variety.

If this is correct, Parmenides is not saying that all that exists is a single *plenum* constituted of undifferentiated Being, everything else that we thought we knew being illusory. He is, rather, saying that only by looking at the real in a very precise (and very unusual) way will we attain knowledge. Other approaches (some more plausible than others) are not absurd or nonsensical, but in fact often very practical and useful – *provided* one does not claim that they *produce knowledge*! What such approaches involve is a view of the real not *qua* real and in its totality but q*ua* qualified/quantified and in terms of its constituent parts. As such these approaches can be and often are the source of perfectly respectable *doxai* about the real – like those to be found in fragments 9 to 19.

9. Fragment 16, which with Mourelatos and others I take to be more likely from the Way of Truth than the Way of Seeming, seems to me both to corroborate the above and to add to it. Reading *hekastos* in line 1, I understand *hos* to refer to the *quality* of our physical constitution. On this interpretation, for all people the unique and unappreciated referent of their varying *doxai* is in fact *to eon*, did they but know it. In all their naming of particular things (reading at 8.38 *onomastai*, with Woodbury), they are actually referring obliquely – and unwittingly – to the real as such (i. e., to the real *qua* real and in its totality). How close they get to *noos* (ascertainment/knowledge) *of* this real as such will turn – wholly or in part? Parmenides is silent on the matter – on their physical constitution. (If the point seems surprising, one should compare fragment 18, in which an individual's homosexuality is in similarly physical fashion credited to a generative malfunction in the parents.)

If the above interpretation of the main lines of the poem is correct, Parmenides has laid strong foundations for the future sciences of metaphysics, epistemology, logic and the philosophy of science. As far as metaphysics is concerned, the notion of *to eon*'s being as such neither qualified nor quantified will be central to the thought of Plato and Aristotle and through them to much of the western tradition. It is also arguably superior in its own right to the central feature of Plato's metaphysical system, in that it avoids the trap of inventing a second universe in an attempt to solve problems supposedly presented by this one. Similarly in epistemology, the notion of a necessary nexus between knowledge and the real will be taken up gratefully by Plato (*Resp*. 476e ff) and will likewise, largely via Aristotle, become part of the western tradition, culminating in what Hintikka has called the "Law of Parmenides": "m knows that p entails p". As far as logic is concerned, it is to Parmenides that we owe the insight of the nexus between ascertainment and its formulation in terms of a true proposition. He may also, given fragment 8.16 (*esti e ouk esti*?), have sensed the force of *exclusive disjunction* as a logical tool for reaching decisions (note the term *krisis*, 8. 15) in problems, as well as the power of *contraposition* in constructing a case (see fragments 2.7 and 6.1 as indicators that *to eon* will in fact be the subject of the poem). Last but not least, he stands completely absolved of a so-called modal fallacy in

fragments 2 and 6, since the poem is about *knowledge*, not simply thinking.

I have also mentioned the influence Parmenides' thought has had on the philosophy of science. The claim is I think less bizarre than it may at first appear. Through the medium of Plato, western science has long adopted the view that there is no such thing as *knowledge* of the world of space-time, merely *doxa* of varying degrees of justification and hence plausibility. What is less well appreciated is the fact that in so arguing Plato was basing himself directly on Parmenides (who may well in turn have been indebted to Xenophanes).

In view of the above, it is my contention that Parmenides is an even greater figure in Greek philosophy than he is often said to be, and on grounds very different from those often adduced.

Translations (DK text)

1. 2.3–5

The Way of Truth

(a) "(the way indicating) that/how (whatever this poem turns out to be discussing) *is* (exists/is there/is the case) and cannot *not-be* (not exist/not be there/not be the case)"; or alternatively,

(b) "(the way) in terms of 'is' (exists/is there/is the case) and 'cannot not-be' (cannot not-exist/not be there/not be the case)".

2. 2.7–8

"For it would be an impossibility for you either to get to know the non-real (the non-existent/what is not there/what is not the case) or to point to it".

3. 3

"For ascertaining and being real (existing/being there/being the case) are one and the same".

*3*a. Heraclitus *fr. 88 DK*

"And as <one and> the same thing, there is present <in us?> living and dead and the waking and the sleeping and young and old. For the

latter, having changed around, are the former, and the former, having changed around, are <back> again <to being> the latter".

4. 6.1

(a) "Picking out and ascertaining must be what is real (exists/is there/is the case)"; or alternatively,

(b) "What is there for picking out and ascertaining must be real (exist/be there/be the case)".

5. 6.1–2

"For it *is there* to *be* real (exist/be the case), whereas *nothing* is *not*".

6. 8.5

"For it is real (exists/is there/is the case) now, altogether, *in its totality*". Cf. 8.11, "thus it must either be real (exist/be there/be the case) *in its totality* or not at all"; 8.22, "nor is it divisible, since *in its totality* it is uniformly real (uniformly exists/is there/is the case)"; 8.24, "but it is *in its totality* full of what is real (of what exists/is there/is the case)"; and possibly also what has come to be known as "Cornford's fragment": "Such, changeless, is that for which *in its totality* the name is 'to be real (exist/be there/be the case)'".

7. 8.34

"Ascertaining <the real> and ascertaining *that* <the real> *is* <real> is one and the same <process>".

8. 8.35–36

"For you will not find <an instance of> ascertainment <of the real> without <also finding> the real in <the proposition> in which <such ascertainment> has been affirmed".

9. 8.52

"Listening to the deceptive ordering of my words".

10. 8.60

"All this arrangement I proclaim to you as *plausible"*.

11. 16.1–4

"The *quality* of each person's ascertainment depends on the way his much-wandering body-components are co-ordinated. For *what* the body's nature knows is identical for each and every person – for the *plenum* is ascertainment".

7. Philolaus Fr. [21] DK and the *Timaeus*

Fragment [21], as I understand it, makes the following claims:

1. The world (in the sense, as fr. 6 suggests, of its *esto*, which one might perhaps translate "reality"), is eternal.
2. It is also indestructible, since nothing is more powerful than either its soul or the soul of its fashioner or both (the text is unclear on the point).
3. The world is a single world, and ruled by a power higher and more powerful than itself.
4. The world of sense-experience had a beginning, and has grown to be a living, breathing creature from the moment of that beginning. Its life is the source of movement and change; nothing further is needed to account for them.
5. The world has a realm within it of the unchanging and the divine – that is, the realm of the stars and planets, and a realm of change – the earth and its immediate environment.
6. The outer realm is the realm of the world's rational soul, our immediate environment the realm of genesis and change.
7. Within the latter human beings are, following the way the father and Demiurge who generated them has ordained, mortal as individuals but unchanging as a species.

Shorn, thus, of some of the terminology, Platonic, Aristotelian and Stoic, of later philosophizing, the claims seem to me not out of keeping with the thinking of a Pythagorean who, while following in the general tradition of the school, can on various matters state his own specific convictions, drawing on whatever sources he thinks reputable. If we take the statements in order:

1. The claim that the real is eternal is not surprising; it is there already in fr. 6.

2. If Philolaus believed, as Ionians like Anaximenes and other Pythagoreans appear to have believed, that the world we know is a living, breathing creature, it was logical for him to have believed that it was thereby ensouled. If he also believed that there is a distinction between rational and non-rational soul (a notion he could easily have drawn from Heraclitus), he might reasonably have felt the distinction to be as meaningfully applicable to the cosmos as to humans. What

was indestructible, it should be added, was presumably the world's *esto* (fr. 6 [DK]); the cosmos of sense perception could well undergo destruction (A18).

3. The doctrine of a single universe (see also fr. 17) was according to Aristotle standard Pythagorean doctrine, and it has in fact a clear antecedent in the writings of Xenophanes. The notion of a power that put it together harmoniously is also easily unpackable as *theion ti*, and indeed Syrianus (admittedly a somewhat shaky source) claimed Philolaus unpacked it in precisely such a way (*Met*.165.33f.).

4. The question of the origin of movement and change was one that all philosophers of antiquity posed themselves. Philolaus' response is predicated on the assumption, shared at a commonsense level by large numbers of Greeks, that there is a causal connexion between life and movement. If the cosmos we know has been alive (or ensouled) from the beginning, we need look to no source other than itself for its being everlastingly in motion – a notion that goes back, according to Aristotle, at least as far as Alcmaeon. As for the world's "breathing", the word does not have to be seen as Stoic *contaminatio*; Anaximenes could just as easily have been its source.

5. The simple distinction between a part of the universe – the realm of astral bodies – marked by apparently eternal motion and invariance and a part of much greater variance and unpredictability was one as likely to be voiced by a Pythagorean as anyone else, since it was based on simple observation, rather than derived from a theory. It too as it happens had already been voiced by Alcmaeon (DK 24 A12).

6. The argument for a connexion between rationality and changelessness is normally attributed to Plato. But a Pythagorean could just as easily have been the first to apply the Empedoclean principle of like to like here, and to have argued that the relationship between the stable state of consciousness we call knowledge and the stable objects that are the objects of such knowledge will very likely hold on a macrocosmic level in that area of the universe that contains both preeminently stable objects – the world of the stars and planets – and a rational soul to cognize them.

7. If the world was conceived of as a living, breathing creature, and at the same time something "put together harmoniously" (fr. 1), the metaphors "father" and "craftsman" are not too surprising a description of the cause.

But is the argument in fact Philolaic?

1. DK may well be right in writing it off in its current guise as "unecht", but we should perhaps note that much of the supposedly "later" terminology is in fact used in a non-technical sense that could well have been drawn from the thinking of the fifth century and earlier. *Dynamis* is used apparently in the non-technical pre-Socratic sense of "power" rather than Aristotelian "potency" or "potentiality", the verb *energein* of "activity" rather than Aristotelian "actuality", and the noun *archa* to denote "beginning" rather than some Aristotelian "principle". As for the reference to the world's "breathing", it has already been noted how this could be as much Anaximenean in origin as Stoic, and the adjective *dynamikoteros* to mean "more powerful" could, given the way in which *dynamis* is used to mean "power", have been a natural locution on the author's own part, without reference to later Stoic usage.

This seems to me to leave open the remote possibility that the fragment is fully authentic, in language as well as content. Against such a possibility lies the sheer unlikelihood of finding so much Platonic and post-Platonic terminology in a fifth-century author's prose, even if it is being used in a way explicable in fifth-century terms.

2. What of the possibility that the fragment masks genuine Philolaic doctrine, whether as a "re-written" piece of original discursive prose or as a forgery based on *disiecta membra* drawn from various parts of writings that have not otherwise survived? Interesting evidence for this, it seems to me, is to be found in the phrase *ex archidiou* ("from the beginning") in a context where the general claim is that the world is in fact eternal. One could I think reasonably hypothesize from this that Philolaus actually claimed (as he seems in fact to have done, fr. 6) that the stuff (*esto*) of the world is indeed eternal but that the world of formed objects that we know did have a beginning. The later writer grasped the general argument, but in his re-write confusingly and perhaps unwittingly used the word 'cosmos' ambiguously, so that the text as it stands now reads in a misleading if not indeed in a self-contradictory manner.

An alternate explanation is that the later writer was deliberate in his use of the word cosmos to describe both the stuff of the world and the world as know it, since he, along with Xenocrates and Speusippus, believed that Philolaus thought that talk of the world's supposed be-

ginning was for didactic purposes only; the world (in both senses, its stuff and its current status) is in fact eternal.

This explanation has the merit of crediting the re-writer with a fair (if misguided) intelligence, and it may well be the correct one. It constitutes no evidence, however, that Philolaus was writing *didaskaklias charin* in frs 1, 2, and 6, where no hints of any such intention are dropped.

As far as the rest of the contents of fr. 21 are concerned, I have already briefly outlined a set of reasons for believing that they could well have been penned by a sophisticated fifth-century writer adhering to the Pythagorean Table of Opposites as a *sine qua non* but after that hoeing his own furrow and drawing on any sources he thinks convincing.

3. The third possibility is that the fragment is a forgery based on *nothing* specifically Philolaic, except accidentally. The object of the forgery was presumably to add a veneer of respectability to later forms of Pythagoreanism already much influenced by Platonic doctrine, especially that of the *Timaeus* as interpreted by Xenocrates and Speusippus, by crediting an original version of them to a Pythagorean philosopher that Plato was known to have respected.

This seems to me highly doubtful, in view of the contents of frs 1, 2 and 6, where a clear distinction between eternal *esto* and the present world-with-a-beginning is drawn. Even were this possibility a fact, however, the evidence of those same fragments would by themselves alone constitute good prima facie evidence for the claim that Plato plagiarized much of the *Timaeus* from Philolaus, since what was plagiarized – the notion that the world we know had a beginning, but that its stuff was eternal – is the very lynch-pin of the *Timaeus*.

My own view is that, as Rostagni argued, fr. 21 can be reasonably used as evidence for the views of Philolaus, in that internal evidence seems to suggest that it contains a) some doctrines (and even, on a rather remoter chance, some specific terminology) that are fully compatible with doctrines that he clearly did hold, and b) other doctrines that are identical with ones we know he held, all of them ([a] and [b]) compatible with the tenets of the Table of Opposites.

If this is the case, the so-called canard that Plato plagiarized the *Timaeus* from Philolaus turns out to be not such a canard after all. Nor, it should be added, does it matter a whit. Much great writing

turns on purloinment; and the quality of the greatness is frequently a function of the quality of what is purloined. In this case Plato, unhampered by modern qualms about source acknowledgement, by purloining gave new life to the thinking of a remarkable Pythagorean forbear on matters that continue to exercise the minds of all for whom the cosmos and its origins are a source of wonder and a supreme challenge to explain.

8. The *Dissoi Logoi* and Early Greek Skepticism

Dissoi Logoi ("Contrasting Arguments") is the name of a little-known anonymous document that is found appended to the works of Sextus Empiricus in the manuscripts containing his writings. It was first published in Paris in 1570,[1] and since that date there has been dispute, among its handful of readers, concerning its date, authorship, purpose and overall philosophical commitments.[2]

That it was perceived by some at any rate of its earliest readers as generally "skeptical" in tone seems clear enough from the fact that it is invariably found in conjunction with the works of Sextus Empiricus, but the precise nature of its skepticism is less clear. From various pieces of internal evidence it seems to have been written long before the time of Sextus, in fact in the first or second decade after the end of the Peloponnesian War (404 B. C.),[3] and most people now believe it is the work of a sophist teacher of the day.[4] For purposes of this paper I shall assume the general correctness of both of these beliefs and confine my discussion to the nature and purpose of the work's contents.

I begin with a brief outline. The 4000-word treatise, which ends abruptly, and looks unfinished, consists of nine short chapters. The structure of the first four is strictly antilogical. Chapter One, for example, entitled On Good and Bad, begins: "On the matter of what is good and bad contrasting arguments are put forward in Greece by educated people: some say that what is good and what is bad are two different things, others that they are the same thing, and that the same thing is good for some but bad for others, or at one time good and at another time bad for the same person". The author then goes on to offer a series of reasons why good and bad might reasonably be thought to be one and the same, and then immediately afterwards a series of reasons why they might reasonably be thought to be different. An example of the first runs: "Illness is bad for the sick but good for the doctors. And death is bad for those who die, but good for the undertakers and grave-diggers". Examples of the second have a uniformly hypothetical cast to them, each one amounting to an assertion of the (presumably self-evident) contradiction it would entail if the

identity thesis in question were true; for example, "Being sick is bad for the sick and also good for them if what is good and what is bad are the same thing".

Chapter Two, on seemly and shameful, follows a similar pattern to Chapter One, as does Chapter Three, on just and unjust. As in Chapter One, the author has an easy time making out a case for the identity thesis, but in maintaining the difference thesis once again does little more than simply assert the (self-evident) contradiction it would entail were the identity thesis in question true. Chapter Four, on truth and falsehood, likewise offers a list of uncontroversial examples in support of the identity thesis, though this time, in his defence of the difference thesis, he bolsters the familiar charge of self-contradiction on the part of those maintaining the identity thesis by the interesting deployment of what looks like an early version of the Liar Paradox (4.6).

> "It is also said that the false statement is different from the true statement; as the name differs, so likewise does the reality. For if anyone were to ask those who say that the same statement is false and true which of the two their own statement is, if the reply were "false", it is clear that a true statement and a false statement are two different things, but if he were to reply "true" then this statement is also false".

Chapter Five is untitled, and the familiar phrase *dissoi logoi* is missing from it, but the basic structure of the treatise as seen so far is maintained: a conglomerate identity thesis is propounded, and then a refutation of it offered. The thesis in question consists of two parts:

a) people possessed of contrary properties may in fact act and speak identically (various common speech acts and activities of the sane and the demented, the wise and the ignorant are offered as examples; e. g., "The demented, the sane, the wise and the ignorant both say and do the same things. First of all they call things by the same name: "earth", "man", "horse", "fire", and everything else. And they do the same things: they sit, eat, drink, lie down, and so on, in the same way");

b) the same person/thing is himself/itself possessed of contrary properties. "The talent", he says, for example, "is heavier than the mina and lighter than two talents; the same thing then is both lighter and heavier". And "what exists (is the case) here [sc. in Greece] does not exist (is not the case) in Libya; nor does what exists (is what is the case) in Libya exist (turn out to be the case) in Cyprus …. Conse-

quently, things both exist (are the case) and do not exist (are not the case)".

As far as the difference thesis is concerned, this is for the first time in the treatise defended with a set of arguments far surpassing the simple assertion of apparent self-contradiction on the part of identity theorists, the first of them interestingly distinguishing identical speech acts by the varying appropriateness of the occasion of utterance (5.9–10), the final one (5.15) drawing a careful distinction, two generations before Aristotle, between existence *simpliciter* and existence *secundum* quid. In the author's own words:

> "As for the affirmation that the same man exists and does not exist I ask, 'Does he exist in some particular respect or in every respect?' Thus, if anyone denies that the man in question exists, he is making the mistake of asserting 'in every respect'. The conclusion is that all these things exist in some way".

Chapter Six, On whether wisdom and moral excellence are teachable, preserves the structure of the first five, setting out first the one case (in this instance the case that wisdom and moral excellence are in fact unteachable) and then the counter-case with arguments remarkably similar to a number of those found in Plato's *Protagoras* (328c, 324d ff.) and *Meno* (93b-94e). At 6. 3–4, for example, we read:

> "Another (proof that wisdom and moral excellence are unteachable) is that, had wisdom and moral excellence been able to be taught, there would have existed recognized teachers of them – the way there have been recognized teachers of the arts. A (further) proof is that those men in Greece who became wise would have taught this wisdom to their children and their friends".

Chapters Seven, Eight and Nine are untitled, and the structure of case and counter-case has now apparently started to break down. The first of the three chapters propounds the single *logos* that it is absurd that offices should be – as many were in Athens – assigned by lot; the essence of the counter-case consists of a single statement at the end asseverating the value of electing qualified people for such offices. The second chapter consists of a little essay on the characteristics of the paradigmatic sophist/orator/politician, and defends among other things the remarkable view that such individuals are by definition both omniscient and omnicompetent. The treatise ends with a short discussion of the value of memorization and with what looks like the beginning of a list of a few specific mnemonic techniques.

Opinions on the author's own stance in the treatise have varied. For Diels and Kranz[5] he is simply *talentlos*, and his views – if he has any – unworthy of further investigation. For others,[6] he is simply a paradigmatic Protagorean, and as such a common-or-garden relativist, convinced that on any topic contrary arguments can be proffered, and offering examples of such arguments in his treatise. For others he is Protagorean in a further, tougher sense, not only proffering contrary arguments on various topics but attempting while so doing to make the weaker of each pair the stronger. And the matter is further complicated by items here and there in the treatise that look to be possibly Gorgian or Hippian or even in a couple of places possibly Socratic[7] in influence, suggesting to some that the author is more of an eclectic than the proponent of any specific philosophical *Weltanschauung*.

That the author is, in general terms, Protagorean in the weaker sense seems undeniable. He clearly does believe that on various topics contrary arguments can be proffered, since he spends the greater part of his time offering examples illustrating the proposition's truth. Whether relativism on his part can be inferred from this is however debatable, both in his own case and in that of Protagoras. As is well known, Plato argued in the *Theaetetus* that relativism was the logical conclusion of Protagoras's "man the measure" doctrine. As is less well known, and as Levi has pointed out,[8] there was no suggestion on Plato's part that Protagoras himself ever drew any such conclusion. What we do know is that, according to Diogenes Laertius,[9] Protagoras was the first to say that there were contrary arguments on every topic, and also "the first to institute contests between arguments", *protos...logon agonas epoiesato*. One natural inference from this is that the "contest" Protagoras saw as basic to philosophical disputes was one between arguments, not people; any further inference is hazardous.

Not long after Protagoras's *floruit*, however, we find Aristophanes – followed later by Aristotle – attributing to him the view that he set out to "make the weaker argument the stronger".[10] But there is no independent evidence to support such a claim, which has all the appearances of popular prejudice based on (legitimate) irritation at the verbal game-playing – apparently for its own sake – practised by sophists, such as Plato's Dionysodorus and Euthydemus, claiming Protagoras as their inspiration. Protagoras himself, by contrast, when

placed on the stage by Plato, comes across, not as a relativist, but as a man adhering to the straightforward and uncomplicated beliefs of his day.

If this picture of Protagoras is the correct one, all that the author of the *Dissoi Logoi*, if he saw himself as in general terms a follower of Protagoras, should be credited with is the view that on any topic contrasting arguments can be and, in terms of sound philosophy, should be proffered; the quality of the individual arguments, however, remains open for discussion and assessment.

Before looking at those arguments, we should first examine briefly two general claims about them that have been thought to offer evidence of the author's own philosophical stance.

1. The author himself makes it clear that, in the opening chapters at least, he himself backs the difference thesis.[11] In addition to his own statements on the matter, we have the facts that

1a) the identity thesis is invariably placed first in sequence, and

1b) the difference thesis is in chapters 1–4 the one spelled out at greater length.

2. The difference thesis invariably attacks a version of the identity thesis wholly different from the one which has just been defended.[12]

Let us look at these claims and their supposed implications.

1. (The author invariably backs the difference thesis). In fact however the author on a number of occasions expresses clear support for the identity thesis (1.2, 2.20, 3.7, 4.2), and this evidence must be weighed in the balance along with the evidence (1.11, 2.26, 5.6, 6.7, 6.13) that suggests a commitment to the identity thesis. One possible conclusion from this is that the author has little idea of what he is doing, and is indeed, as Diels suggested, *talentlos*. There are however other possible conclusions, which I shall discuss later.

1a) (The identity thesis is invariably placed first in sequence). It has been argued from this that it is consequently the difference thesis and its supporting arguments that are invariably left ticking over in the reader's mind, and that this is a suasion in support of the view that the author himself supports such a difference thesis. There may be something in this, but against it one should point out that the identity thesis invariably propounds views the factual accuracy of which is open to relatively simple testing and observation. This being the case, and something readily ascertainable by even the most unsophisticated

reader, the author may well, it seems to me, have intended the reader to notice that the difference thesis possesses whatever strength it does thanks to a witting or unwitting misrepresentation of the identity thesis, and the point will be made with particular clarity if the identity thesis is placed first in sequence.

1b) (The difference thesis is in all four of the first four chapters spelled out at greater length). This is as it happens simply false; it is in fact the identity thesis which in those chapters is the longer, as a glance at the text makes clear. Even if it were true, however, nothing of any clarity concerning the author's commitments, *pace* Untersteiner, can be inferred, except by those who find a causal connection between an argument's length and its plausibility.

Of much greater substance (and possible import) is the point ([2] above) – glossed over or not noticed by commentators – that the difference thesis invariably attacks a version of the identity thesis different from the one that has just been defended. I say "defended", rather than "proffered and defended", since typically the identity thesis will be proffered as an (extreme) identity statement but actually defended as a (very moderate) predicative statement. Among many examples, one might take chapter one of the treatise. The opening lines, as we have seen, read as follows:

> "On the matter of what is good and bad contrasting arguments are put forward in Greece by educated people: some say that what is good and what is bad are two different things, others that they are the same thing, and that the same thing is good for some but bad for others, or at one time good and at another time bad for the same person".

What is interesting here is the fact that the identity thesis is first expressed as an identity statement ("[what is good and what is bad] are the same thing") and then immediately afterwards as a predicative statement ("the same thing is good for some but bad for others", etc.). The thesis is then defended (1.2–10), but only in its predicative version ("death is bad for those who die, but good for the undertakers and the grave-diggers", etc.). When it comes to the difference thesis, however (1.11 ff.), the author defends it by reference to the extreme version of the identity thesis – i. e., its version as an identity statement – that had been mentioned but in no way defended. He has as a result a very easy time pointing out that such a thesis is self-contradictory. It is indeed, and would no doubt have been admitted to be such by the proponents

of the predicative version of the thesis who had just had their arguments aired. But he has of course knocked down a straw man, and we are no further forward as to his views on the value of the arguments that uphold a moderate – and perfectly defensible – version of the identity thesis, as against the value of arguments in defence of the extreme version.

What we have instead is a constant reiteration that he favors the difference thesis (i. e., that x and y are, as he puts it, as different in reality as they are in name [1. 11]), but with no hard arguments in defence of that thesis other than the claim that its opposite leads to self-contradiction, and – as we have seen – with the occasional asseveration that he does in fact support various identity theses.

Two major interpretations of all this seem possible. The first is that of Diels, to wit, that our author is simply devoid of talent. Though Diels does not spell the matter out, presumably he means either that the author has failed to notice that the version of the identity thesis he attacks is never the version of it the arguments for which he has just propounded; or, more seriously, that he could not in fact recognize the difference between identity statements and predicative statements in the first place. The result in either case is a lamentable failure to realize that the supposed difference thesis he supports is wholly compatible with if not in fact the very same as the moderate identity thesis he has just in fact outlined.

The second interpretation leaves open the possibility that the author is fully aware of the difference between an identity statement and a predicative statement, but for propaedeutic reasons not unsimilar, perhaps, to those underlying Plato's aporetic dialogues, constructs arguments predicated upon their supposed sameness. If this is the case, the treatise will consist of more than rote-lists of arguments and counter-arguments for the use of sophists. It will in fact be a genuine teaching manual for sophists, with arguments displayed in such a way as to challenge readers (or hearers) to hone their philosophical skills by working out for themselves the relative worth of such arguments.

I am myself inclined to accept this latter interpretation, on the grounds that it fits the facts as well as the first and has at the same time the merit of crediting our author with a modicum of philosophical intelligence. It does not, however, tell us anything specific about

the author's own philosophical stance on particular issues, and more generally whether those who, in appending the treatise to the works of Sextus Empiricus, clearly thought he was reasonably classifiable as a skeptic.

As far as content is concerned, if the interpretation outlined immediately above is correct, it might be thought that we may be forever precluded from knowing the author's own philosophical stance, since that stance was irrelevant to his objective in writing the treatise. There is, however, a case for saying that his position emerges despite this.

As we saw earlier, while for the most part strongly backing the difference thesis he also on occasion makes affirmative noises concerning the identity thesis. This would on the face of it constitute evidence that he is putting up the best case he can for both sides, and thereby blocking any rash attempt on the reader's part to waste time attempting to unmask his (the author's) own private opinions. But this could be mistaken. The affirmative noises are all, as it turns out, in favor of the straightforward, easily verifiable predicative version of the identity thesis in question. And since, as we saw, this version is barely distinguishable, if distinguishable at all, from the difference thesis that is its supposed contrary, it seems eminently possible that the author's "own" stance will in fact coincide with this thesis.

If this is true, our sophist-author will turn out to be – not surprisingly – an empiricist, and one firmly convinced of the worth and importance of the wealth of empirical evidence he uses in support of the predicative statements of various identity theses throughout the treatise. And the type of skepticism appropriately thereby attributed to him will consist of the skepticism of all those who, before and since, have demanded evidence before drawing general conclusions.

Whether such empiricism and skepticism was an all-embracing feature of his thinking is a conclusion less easy to draw. At 1.17, for example, the author disclaims any intention of telling us "what the good is" (*ti esti to agathon*), a phrase that would not have been surprising on the lips of Socrates. And at 4.5 he writes: "It is clear, then, that the same statement is false when the false is present to it, and true when the true is present to it". The doctrine of "presence" of universal to particular is, as is well known, thought by many to be characteristic of the Platonic/Socratic Theory of Forms, and indeed a specific contribution of theirs to philosophical speculation. This may well be the

case, and our author – given the presumptive date of publication of the treatise – one of possibly many influenced by Socratic argumentation. On the other hand, it seems equally possible that such an argument was "in the air" in sophistic circles at this time, and actually *drawn* by Socrates *from* such circles. In view of the lack of evidence either way, the matter must be left in tantalizing doubt.

However that may be, it seems beyond question that the author is strongly affirming in this instance at any rate a position more appropriately characterized as essentialist than empiricist. In combination with the empiricism that appears to characterize so much else of the treatise it constitutes a view of the real and of language used to describe the real that Socrates (if not Plato) would almost certainly have found respectable, and for that matter Aristotle too.

Two further pieces of evidence, already noticed in passing, to support such a view should be mentioned.

1. In the chapter on truth and falsehood we read the following statement, as a defence of the difference thesis begins (4.6):

> "It is also said that the false statement is different from the true statement; as the name differs, so does the reality. For if anyone were to ask those who say that the same statement is false and true which of the two their own statement is, if the reply were 'false', it is clear that a true statement and a false statement are two different things, but if he were to reply 'true' then this statement is also false".

The argument is a shrewd one, and incorporates elements of the so-called Liar Paradox. In its fully articulated form this was first set out a generation later by Eubulides, a disciple of Euclides of Megara (who was himself a contemporary of the author of the *Dissoi Logoi*), and both the author and Eubulides could well have found the core of the argument in Democritus. Perhaps for present purposes more significantly, an analogous argument is, with some effect, set out by Socrates in Plato's *Theaetetus* (170e ff.), as part of his criticism of Protagoras' "man the measure" doctrine.

2. At the end of chapter five the author concludes:

> "As for the affirmation that the same man exists and does not exist I ask: 'Does he exist in some particular respect or in every respect?' Thus, if anyone denies that the man in question exists, he is making the mistake of asserting 'in every respect'. The conclusion is that all these things exist in some way".

The *simpliciter/secundum quid* distinction employed in this argument is remarkable to come across two generations before the appearance of Aristotle's *Sophistical Refutations*, and suggests a philosophical expertise on the author's part far greater than is usually attributed to him. We also know, from Aristotle himself, that little manuals of sophistic arguments were in circulation in Athens and elsewhere in his day. Which opens up the intriguing possibility a) that one such manual was the *Dissoi Logoi*, b) that it was actually read by Socrates/Plato and Aristotle, and c) either that its use of features of the Liar Paradox influenced Socrates and Plato or that its use of the *simpliciter/secundum quid* distinction influenced Aristotle, or both. As in the earlier case of the origin of the doctrine of "presence", no evidence is unfortunately available either way, and the matter must once again be left in tantalizing doubt.

To return however from such speculation to the question at hand: can the author of the *Dissoi Logoi* be meaningfully described as a skeptic? The answer, it seems to me, must be "Yes", on two counts, though hardly in the technical sense of the term that Sextus would himself have recognized.

1. As far as the content of his beliefs is concerned, he is committed to the adducing of empirical evidence in areas where such evidence is either actually or potentially available. In the area of true and false propositions, by contrast, he seems more essentialist in his analysis. The total package might reasonably be described as one of moderate empiricism and moderate skepticism, in that empirical evidence, when adduced, will serve to dispel the skepticism that fueled the investigation, but not all problems, it seems, are deemed to be amenable to the adducing of such empirical evidence.

2. His methodology, by contrast – and here he draws directly on Protagoras – is uncompromisingly empirical, in that no investigation is deemed to have been properly conducted unless both sides of the question – and there always are two – have been aired.

Whether the above arguments alone would account for the work's invariably being found in Sextus Empiricus manuscripts is certainly open to question, given the broader and more searching range of Sextus' own brand of skepticism. But three further features of its style and contents may have served as suasions in favor of such a collocation.

1) If the author was understood (wrongly, as I have argued, but not surprisingly, given what we know of the way in which Protagoras' views on *logos*/counter-*logos* came to be interpreted in antiquity) as himself adhering to the view that in his various chapters *logos* and counter-*logos* were equipollent, a compiler could be forgiven for seeing an affinity between this view and the doctrine of equipollence that so characterizes the writings of Sextus.

2) A more specific suasion is found at 5. 13–14, where, after mentioning instances of changes in meaning brought about, not by the subtraction of anything but by a mere change of accent, he goes on:

> "Since, therefore, there is such a difference when nothing is taken away, what if in that case somebody does either add something or take something away? I shall give an example of the sort of thing I mean. If someone were to take away one from ten <or to add one to ten, Diels>, there would no longer be ten or even one, and so on in the same way in all other instances".

As I have put it elsewhere (*Commentary*, *ad loc.*):

> The argument turns on a particular use of the word "ten". The form can be used collectively (*ta deka* – cf. words like "score", "dozen", etc., in English) or distributively (*deka*), leaving open the possibility for the author to argue (as he apparently does here) that to (supposedly) take away from "the ten" (*ta deka*) that I have is to leave me without my ten, and so apparently without even one of them! (In the same way, one might argue, one cannot take one away from a "rugby fifteen" and get a "rugby one" plus a "rugby fourteen"; one either has a rugby fifteen or one has not.) Similar addition-subtraction puzzles crop up in Plato (*Crat.* 432 a–b) and Aristotle (*SE* 22. 178a29–37),[13] but are as it happens a particular feature of the writings of Sextus; see *Pyrr. Hyp.* 3. 85, *Adv. Math.* 4. 23–24, *Adv. Phys.* 1. 303–330, 2. 308–309.

3) A final possible specific suasion is to be found at 2. 20, where the author is arguing that the difference between seemly and shameful actions is that the former are performed "at the right moment" (*kairoi*), the latter "at the wrong moment" (*en akairiai*). An analogous – though far from identical – argument is expounded by Sextus at *Adv. Eth.* 64–67 and credited to the Stoic Ariston of Chios; and, possibly tellingly, an analogy is drawn from the different placing of letters in the spelling of names (cf. *Dissoi Logoi* 5. 12 for the same point), which is said to depend upon the force of *hoi kairoi* (cf. *ibid.* 2. 20, *kairoi*).

Such suasions, small though they may be as individual items, could well, it seems to me, have been deemed to have sufficient collective force to persuade a hesitating compiler to place the *Dissoi Logoi* alongside of the works of Sextus. Whether we were meant to infer from such a collocation that the work should be attributed to Sextus himself or simply to his philosophical entourage we cannot tell, and in any case the author was wrong. Where he was less obviously wrong was in his appreciation of the fact that there are features of its style and content which, as I hope I have shown, the master might well have interpreted as significant gropings towards the light.

Notes

1 In H. Stephanus, *Diog. Laert. Opera* 1 (Paris 1570) 470–482.

2 For the most recent edition of the work see T. M. Robinson, *Contrasting Arguments. An Edition of the Dissoi Logoi* (New York 1979), from which the various translations in this paper are taken.

3 See especially 1.8, "And in the matter of war (I shall speak first of the most recent events) the Spartan victory over the Athenians and their allies was good for the Spartans but bad for the Athenians and their allies …"

4 For the various views on authorship that have been put forward over the years see Robinson 41–54. A notable exception to the till relatively recently accepted view is that of Thomas M. Conley, "Dating the *Dissoi Logoi*: A Cautionary Note", *Ancient Philosophy* 5.1 (1985) 59–65, which upholds the possibility of anonymous Byzantine authorship. He is in some measure supported in this by Miles Burnyeat (*Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy* [1998] *s. v. Dissoi Logoi*), who also thinks that the treatise could well have been written centuries later than the early fourth century B. C., and that practically nothing incontrovertible can be said about its author, its date of authorship, or its contents. As will become clear from the present article, I continue to be myself somewhat more sanguine than Burnyeat about the reasonableness of affirming the treatise's sophistic authorship, its traditional date of composition around the beginning of the fourth century B. C., and our ability to reach a broad understanding of its contents, while conceding that anything approaching certainty in the matter is of course out of the question.

5 H. Diels and W. Kranz, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker* (Berlin 1916), *ad loc.*

6 For details see Robinson 55 ff.

7 *Ibid.* 59 ff.

8 A. J. Levi, "On Twofold Statements", *American Journal of Philology* 61 (1940) 292–306.

9 9.50 ff. = Protagoras A 1, B 6a DK6.

10 Aristoph. *Clouds* 882–884; Aristotle *Rhet.* 1402a23 = Protagoras B 6b DK6.

11 For proponents of the view see Robinson 73.

12 *Ibid.* 76.

13 For discussion of the passage see Rosamond Kent Sprague, "Aristotle on Mutilation: *Metaphysics* 5.27", *Syllecta Classica* 2 (1990) 20.

9. Socrates and Others as *Epigonoi* of Protagoras

In this paper I shall attempt to show that Socrates and his entourage were one of three sets of *epigonoi* of Protagoras active in Greece towards the end of the fifth century B. C. The other two groups are represented by the type of sophist to be found in the pages of the *Euthydemus* and by the anonymous author of the so-called *Dissoi Logoi*.

To begin with Protagoras: not the least of the problems concerning him is distinguishing legend from history. Notoriously, he was accused, a generation after his *floruit* and perhaps even during his lifetime, not just of adherence to the relatively innocuous proposition that on any topic a pair of contrasting *logoi* can be adduced,[1] but also – more reprehensibly – of habitually making the weaker of two such *logoi* the stronger.[2] Further claims in Plato's *Theaetetus* made him out to be a phenomenalist, and by extrapolation a relativist. My own view on the matter is that only the first and third of these claims are likely to be soundly based. The second and fourth of them, if they have any basis in fact, are more reasonably made with regard to some of his would-be disciples. In the present paper I shall argue that the first claim – i. e., that Protagoras adhered to the view that there are contrasting *logoi* on all topics – is true not just for Protagoras but apparently for such *epigonoi* as the author of the *Dissoi Logoi* and Socrates; and that the more extravagant second and fourth claims clearly fit such would-be disciples as Dionysodorus and Euthydemus but in no significant way the author of the *Dissoi Logoi* or Socrates.

Little time need be spent on the *Euthydemus*. It is a classic, if somewhat tedious classic, of the art of verbal game-playing, and the best example we have of the so-called eristic strain in post-Protagorean philosophical discourse, whether or not its critics were right in attributing the tendency to Protagoras himself.[3] If it had any value, that value would presumably have lain in its ability to rouse dormant logical abilities in those compelled to endure it or react to it. But there is little in the dialogue to suggest any such reputable intention on the part of Dionysodorus and Euthydemus; the verbal game seems pretty

clearly to be its own end. It is true that Dionysodorus and Euthydemus, when asked by Socrates, lay claim to being able to instruct the young Clinias in *arete*, but once the verbal juggling begins the matter is apparently quietly forgotten. Certainly, any supposed causal connection between the verbal gymnastic and the imparting of *arete* receives not a word of mention. And any other skills than the ones they flaunt so tediously in the dialogue that might possibly serve as evidence of such ability are conspicuous by their absence.

Turning to the *Dissoi Logoi*, we find ourselves I think in a very different atmosphere.[4] The anonymous author is clearly committed, as was Protagoras, to the view that on all topics contrasting opinions can be held, and much of the treatise is occupied with the elaboration of arguments in defence of such opinions. The technique is for two thirds of the treatise one of thesis and counter-thesis, a typical thesis (2.1) being "The seemly and the shameful are as different in reality as they are in name", the counter-thesis being "The seemly and the shameful are one and the same, whatever their difference in name". It has been said by many that the author cannot disguise the fact that he himself invariably backs the counter-thesis,[5] and Gulley,[6] convinced of the basic weakness in all instances of the counter-thesis, takes the next step and accuses the author of doing what Aristophanes and then Aristotle had accused Protagoras of doing, i. e., trying to make the weaker argument the stronger.

But this seems very doubtful. While it is true that the author says on occasion that he supports a particular counter-thesis,[7] on other occasions he offers clear support to the thesis.[8] More importantly, the thesis is in any instance a very moderate, predicative one, the factual accuracy of which is open to social and cultural observation; for example, the thesis (2.7) that "it is seemly to treat one's friends kindly, but shameful to treat one's enemies in that way. And it is shameful to run away from one's enemies, but seemly to run away from one's competitors in a stadium". When such a thesis is attacked, however, it is habitually transformed into an extreme, un-nuanced position far removed from the moderate position that has just been outlined and defended. The moderate predicative thesis, for example, that under different circumstances one and the same activity can be construed as both good and evil – "Illness is bad for the sick but good for the doctors. And death is bad for those who die, but good for the undertakers

and the grave-diggers" (1.3) – is attacked as though it were the immoderate identity-thesis that good and evil are one and the same (1.11 ff.).

What is one to make of this approach? One possibility is, following Diels, to write off the author as simply "*talentlos*", and among other things unable to recognize the difference between an absurdly false identity statement and an innocuously true predicative one. An alternate route, followed by Gulley, is to accuse him of knowing full well what the difference is, and of setting out to "make the weaker argument the stronger" by deliberately confusing them. A third possible route, which I am myself inclined to follow, is to argue that the author is fully cognizant of the fact that the extreme thesis now under attack is not in fact the moderate and harmless thesis that has just been outlined and defended. He is indeed "perfectly aware of the difference between identity statements and predicative statements, and perfectly aware that the (moderate) thesis propounded is not in any sense weak, but is in fact readily verifiable and in itself unimpeachable. The pseudo-counter-thesis, which is in fact the antithesis to a thesis never propounded…is presented for its propaedeutic value, to instruct the beginner in the detection of fallacious reasoning".[9] On this understanding, the author, far from backing the difference thesis, sees that the difference thesis is indeed the weaker of the two (not least because it is based upon a misunderstanding of the identity thesis), but for very respectable propaedeutic reasons makes out the best case he can for it anyway.

If this interpretation of the author's intentions and method is correct, he is picking up on an important strain in Protagoras' thought, i. e., that on any topic antithetical arguments can be propounded. But in offering a set of examples of such arguments he shows no sign of *eristike* in the sense in which we see it displayed in the *Euthydemus*.

In what respect, if any, does Socrates' form of argumentation follow either of these tendencies? We know to begin with that Diogenes Laertius claimed that Protagoras was in fact "the first to introduce the Socratic form of argument".[10] But the purport of this is unclear. It may have been in part a claim that Protagoras advocated the technique of short question and answer, but this is hard to square with the picture of Protagoras portrayed in the dialogue of that name, in which his *resistance* to such a method is highlighted. Or it may have been a

claim that Protagoras was committed to *eristike* as a fundamental element of philosophical argument. Or perhaps a claim that for Protagoras philosophical argument is fundamentally the struggle for supremacy among antithetical *logoi*. As we have seen, Protagoras, according to Diogenes Laertius, wrote a book entitled *Techne Eristikon*, and Diogenes says earlier that *protos…logon agonas epoiesato*.[11] One natural inference from this is that for Protagoras the *agon* – or, more colorfully, the *eris* – basic to philosophical disputes was between arguments, not people; the object of discourse was to be the victory of the better argument, not the victory at all costs of some particular interlocutor over another.[12] It is easy to see however how over-zealous disciples could mistake the one position for the other, and in so doing consider themselves faithful adherents to the doctrine of the master.

Such, I have suggested, were sophists like Dionysodorus and Euthydemus, at any rate as Plato portrays them, but not apparently the author of the *Dissoi Logoi*. Nor, it seems, Socrates himself. I say "it seems", because Socratic theory and practice do not always achieve a comfortable fit. There is on the one hand the Socrates who professes frequently and sometimes movingly that his sole aim is to examine the cogency of particular *logoi*, and to go without fear where the argument leads him. A Socrates, in a word, for whom, as for Protagotas, sound philosophy is a contest of *logoi*, not a quest for personal victory.[13] There is on the other hand the Socrates who not infrequently reduces both his interlocutors and his readers to exasperation with his never-ending demolition of the arguments of others yet apparent determination never to advance a position of his own. While this is not perhaps the philosophical game-playing of a Dionysodorus and Euthydemus, on occasion it has uncomfortable overtones of it; so much so that, as Plato himself admits, the Socratic elenchus is often treated as a spectator sport by bystanders to the discussion and imitated by them – in and out of season – as though it were indeed just that.[14] Socrates was presumably aware of the impression he was creating in his audience, yet there is little in the dialogues to suggest he ever did much about it.

This alone would constitute a reason why to many Athenians, including it seems someone of the sophistication of Aristophanes, Socrates was a sophist not self-evidently distinguishable from other sophists. But some potentially distinguishing features of the Socratic method

(or, if one wishes, of the Socratic brand of the sophistic method) have been frequently pointed out. The short question-and-answer technique, for example, looks distinctive, though not necessarily something initiated by Socrates himself,[15] as is the famous Socratic irony (probably better translated, as by Richard Robinson, "slyness").[16] More important however is the orientation of all argument towards the search for a definition, and the use of the elenchus as a device for the unmasking of ignorance, even if enlightenment never replaces it. The same can be said for his use of what Aristotle called *epagoge*, and which in the case of Socrates seems to have meant a combination of analogical and inductive argument.

While these are undoubtedly salient features of the Socratic method, and were, if not invented by Socrates, very likely first exploited in detail by him, it is worth pausing a while to speculate about the origin of the essentialism which underlies them. The accepted wisdom is to say that Socrates' essentialism is a characteristic of his philosophy that radically distinguishes it from the prevalent sophistic nominalism. While this may be largely true, a brief passage in the contemporary *Dissoi Logoi* suggests that it may have not have been universally true. At D.L. 1.17, for example, the author disclaims any intention of trying to tell us *ti esti to agathon*, a phrase that would not have been in the least surprising on the lips of Socrates himself. And at 4.5 he writes: "It is clear, then, that the same statement is false when the false is present to it, and true when the true is present to it". In this instance we have in a single sentence – one explicitly described by the sophist-author as his own view (D.L. 4.2) – an apparent commitment both to essentialism and to a concomitant doctrine of *parousia* that are usually considered paradigmatic features of Socraticism.

One obvious explanation of all this is of course that our author is here wittingly or unwittingly influenced by – and purveying the views of – Socrates himself. This is an undoubted possibility, but only a possibility. For if the author really is genuinely inclined to essentialism, he presumably had some device for explaining the relationship of universal to particular. And who could then discount the possibility, given the presumptive dating of the treatise,[17] that he, and perhaps other sophists likewise inclined, were experimenting with *parousia*-type explanations of that relationship at much the same time as Socrates himself? And if this is true, how confident can we then remain either that

essentialism is a distinguishing charactistic of Socraticism or even that the doctrine of *parousia* is?

I mention these points, not to downgrade the importance of essentialism as the bedrock on which critical features of the Socratic method are based, but to underscore the possibility, as it seems to me, that other *epigonoi* of Protagoras, such as the author of the Dissoi *Logoi*, committed like Socrates to the view that contrasting arguments can be formulated on any topic, might well have come to the conclusion, independently of Socrates, that the *logoi* in question would tend to fall into a natural pattern of essentialist versus relativist. While some of them no doubt gave readier assent to those *logoi* which were relativist in color, some, including Socrates and it would seem the author of the *Dissoi Logoi*, proved more attracted to those that were essentialist. And in so doing they could claim, just as cogently as those who took Protagoras to be the archetype of their own relativistic thinking, that they themselves – as essentialists – were in fact his truest disciples. For if Plato's own *Protagoras* is to be any guide, the Protagoras of history is firmly committed to a belief in traditional moral values.[18] And as the Socrates of the *Theaetetus* will later carefully point out, relativism is a natural inference from remarks like *anthropos metron*; but he makes no suggestion that Protagoras himself ever drew any such inference. Add to this Socrates' commitment to the view – apparently drawn straight from Protagoras – that philosophy is a battle of *logoi*, not of persons, and one has the beginnings of an argument that, for all his aspersions on other sophists, Socrates not only sees Protagoras as in some way different from all those, but as being in some significant respects his own distinguished philosophical forbear.

Notes

1 Diog. Laert. 9.51 = Protagoras A 1, B 6a DK.

2 Arist. *Rhet.* B 24. 1402a23 = Protagoras B 6b DK; cf. Aristophanes *Clouds* 882–884.

3 We are informed by Diogenes Laertius (9.55 = Protagoras A 1 DK) that Protagoras wrote a book entitled *Techne Eristikon*. Some have doubted the correctness of this assertion, in light of the very non-eristical Protagoras who appears in the pages of Plato's *Protagoras*. But it seems equally possible that the form of eristic advocated by Protagoras in his book was of the long-speech type appropriate to the

rhetorical disputation of his day, not the rapid-fire question-and-answer form of a later generation of sophists interested in winning arguments at any cost. See Norman Gulley, *The Philosophy of Socrates* (London 1968) 27.

4 For the most recent edition of the *D. L.* see *Contrasting Arguments. An Edition of the Dissoi Logoi*, by T. M. Robinson (Arno Press, N. Y., 1979).

5 E. g., by K. Joel, *Der echte und der Xenophontische Sokrates* 1 (Berlin 1893) 401; H. Gomperz, *Sophistik und Rhetorik*, 191–192; A. J. Levi, "On Twofold Statements", *American Journal of Philology* 61 (1940) 296–297; E. Dupréel, *Les Sophistes* (Neuchâtel 1948) 206; M. Untersteiner, *I Sofisti* 2. 2 (Milan 1967) *ad loc.*

6 *Op. cit.* (above, n. 3) 25.

7 1.11, 2.26, 5.6, 6.7, 6.13; cf. 2.2, 3.2.

8 1.2, 2.20, 3.7, 4.2.

9 Robinson (above, n. 4) 76.

10 Diog. Laert. 9. 53 = Protagoras A 1 DK.

11 Diog. Laert. 9. 52 = Protagoras A 1 DK.

12 There is nothing in the fragments or testimonia to suggest that Protagoras really did set out "to make the weaker argument the stronger". His exact – and fairly innocuous – claim was that on any given subject a pair of contrasting *logoi* can be adduced. Nothing is said about the relative strength of such *logoi*. If Aristotle and Aristophanes are right in their assertions that Protagoras actually set out to make the weaker argument the stronger, they either had at their disposal specific evidence not available to us or were extrapolating from the goings-on of sophists such as Dionysodorus and Euthydemus.

13 See, e. g., Pl. *Charm.* 166de, where Socrates affirms that no attention should be paid to the question of who has been refuted, Critias or Socrates; what counts is the argument, not the disputants. The same point is made trenchantly at *Phd.* 91a: Socrates' objective is a conviction on his own part that a sound conclusion has been arrived at, and only incidentally that he has convinced an audience.

14 Pl. *Sph.* 230c, *Resp.* 539b. For further references see Richard Robinson, in *The Philosophy of Socrates*, ed. Gregory Vlastos (New York 1971) 82.

15 The argument of *Dissoi Logoi* chapter 8 suggests that the question of the philosophical value of the technique of brief question and

answer was "in the air" in the late fifth and/or early fourth centuries. There is no comment one way or the other on Socrates' putative role in the discussion.

16 *Op. cit.* (above, n. 14) 80.

17 Around 403–395 B. C.

18 See Levi, *art. cit.* (above, n. 4) 297.

10. Socrates, Anaxagoras, *Nous* and *Noesis*

In this paper, which will range fairly widely, I shall be arguing that the doctrine of cosmic *Nous* which the young Socrates, according to the *Phaedo*, admired but only with reservations, falls into a tradition which had a significant history before Socrates and an even more significant history after him, some of it very probably due to his influence. In so arguing I shall be taking what is still only a minority view on the nature and pedigree of the concept (and related concepts, like the verb *noein* and the noun *noesis*), and will of course be offering evidence at various points why I do this. The span of the paper could in theory be the whole of Greek antiquity, but I shall confine it to the sixth to fourth centuries B. C.

Let us start with the *Phaedo*, and the passage in which Socrates tells how, as a young man, he was fascinated to hear someone reading from Anaxagoras' book, and how delighted he was to learn that Anaxagoras believed that "Intelligence directs and is the cause of everything" (97c). He was, however, chagrined to learn that Intelligence was for Anaxagoras not a directive force in the way he, Socrates, himself imagined, that is, one "with responsibility", as he puts it, "for the management of things". What this means, it turns out, is that, according to Socrates, Intelligence in Anaxagoras' scheme of things is effectively useless, since the real causes of things for him are, not Intelligence or anything of that order, but physical substances like air and water and the like. What Socrates himself wants as the cause of each thing and the totality of things is what he calls "the best", in virtue of which it is "the best (thing) for them to be the way they are" (98ab). Or, to put it differently, the cause he is after is the one which will account for why he is sitting here in this jail and not running off to Megara, rather than what conjunction of bones, sinews and flesh accounts for the fact that he is sitting rather than say standing or lying down, his assumption being that *both* of those questions are answerable in one and only one way, and that is by reference to "the best".

Tempting though it is at this stage to start looking at the teleological mindset of Socrates himself, I should like to stay for the moment with the concept of *Nous* in Anaxagoras that had proved to be so fascinating to him. Most of the translators translate it as "mind" (with or

without a capital letter); Gallop, rather more satisfactorily, as "Intelligence". And for working purposes this is no doubt fine. But a study of linguistic and philosophical antecedents suggests something more precise, I want to argue, and something rich in hitherto barely discussed implications.

Let us start with a thinker writing around a century earlier, Xenophanes. In a famous two lines (fr. 23 DK) he talks of

> "One god, greatest amongst gods and men, in no way similar to mortals either in body or *noema*";

and elsewhere (fr. 24), talking of the same one god, he says:

> "All of him sees, all of him *noei*, all of him hears".

I have deliberately transliterated rather than translated two words here, *noein* and *noema*, given that they are clearly cognate with that *Nous* which so obviously attracted Socrates in the *Phaedo*. Most people translate the noun as "thought" and the verb as "think", in the way most people translate *nous*, too, as we have seen, as "thought". But are we on the right track here? I think not. And the scholar who deserves credit, it seems to me, for directing us to a better track is Kurt von Fritz. In two articles, which have never had the impact they ought to have, very possibly because they appeared in the middle of the second world war, von Fritz, in my estimation, showed definitively that, in Homeric Greek and in the Greek of Hesiod, Xenophanes and Parmenides, the verb *noein*, while occasionally meaning something like "plan", had as its fundamental meaning something like "recognize the situation", or more precisely "come to recognize the situation". For details one should consult von Fritz, Guthrie, and later on Heitsch (who talks of it as being "mental or intellectual perception, recognition"). Lesher, the most recent scholar to discuss the matter in detail, has some doubts whether the recognition sense is more "fundamental" than any other, but he too admits that it is the most natural translation in a very large number of places.

I myself believe that the soundest hermeneutical approach, given the circumstances, is simply to keep in mind the possibility of the recognition sense, and then to allow the context to guide us towards an interpretation. This may seem unstartling, but the results begin to look startling once the technique is adopted. So, for example, here in Xenophanes we can translate

> "One god, greatest amongst gods and men, in no way to similar to mortals either in body or in how he comes to know/comes to recognize/comes to ascertain/comes to be aware".

And

> "As a totality he sees, as a totality he comes to know/recognize/ascertain/be aware, as a totality he hears".

Is this translation of *noein* better than the translation "thinks" here? Who can be sure, given the lack of context which might just have clarified the matter? But it is on the face of it not in the least *less* likely either, and for the moment we can just leave the matter in tantalizing doubt and move on.

To Parmenides. And here we have what seems to me a rich mine to quarry, beginning with fr. 2.2 (DK). In this fragment we are told of the only routes of inquiry that "*esti noesai*", a phrase usually translated by something like "can be thought of" (in the sense, presumably, of "can be conceived of"). Or is it: "that we can come to be aware of"? If the latter, it is certainly in line with the thinking of his predecessor Xenophanes, with whom he has so many affinities, and who made much of the fact of the limitations to our knowledge. The fact that the second route is then instantly described as "*panapeuthea*", a word based on an ascertainment word that serves usefully as a synonym, is also fairly easily accommodated, the distinction between the two routes now being between one which is available for ascertainment/open to ascertainment and the other which is in fact totally falsely thought to be open to ascertainment.

A reason for this is given immediately:

> "For you could never ascertain/come to know/come to be aware of (*gnoies*, another synonym) that which is not; nor could you point to it in words (*phrazais*).
> For (fr. 3) to come to be aware/get to know and to be are one and the same".

The lines have been greatly controverted, as I need hardly point out, but it seems to me that they are not beyond understanding. A well-known fragment of Heraclitus (88 DK) suggests very strongly to me at least that it was possible at this time, long before Euclid, to talk of sameness in a very loose sense, rather than as mathematical identity. In this fragment Heraclitus does his possibly bewildered readers the service of for once spelling out what he means by those sentences of

his which, to the consternation of Aristotle, seem to make sameness claims that run in the face of the law of non-contradiction.

In his own words:

> "And as one and the same thing there is present <in us?> living and dead and waking and sleeping and young and old".

And then, very helpfully, he tells us exactly what he meant by so bizarre-looking a claim:

> "For (*gar*) the latter, having changed around, are the former, and the former, having changed around, are <back> again <to being> the latter".

In a word, talk of sameness is to be taken as talk about essential connectedness, like the points on a continuum, or like night and day (fr. 57). And the same seems to be precisely what Parmenides too has in mind. "Coming to be aware that p and p" are "the same" in precisely the sense of being "necessarily connected", and Hintikka is very close to it when he calls 'knowing that p and p' "the law of Parmenides".

Once this is seen, it becomes clear that Parmenides has not fallen into the modal fallacy of which G. E. L. Owen once accused him. The opening lines of fragment six, far from affirming the bizarre proposition that being and thinking are identical, as Vlastos wanted to take them, affirm instead the very commonsensical epistemological proposition that if something is available for ascertainment (*noein*) and picking out in words (*legein*), it must exist/be the case (*emmenai*).

Which brings us to Anaxagoras again, via, significantly, his contemporary, Diogenes of Apollonia. For Diogenes it is *Noesis* (which seems to be for him what Heraclitus had earlier called *to sophon*) that accounts for the way the world is and works, and more illuminatingly, for how things "are disposed in the finest possible way" (*[diakeitai] hos anyston kallista*) (fr. 3). It is the first known reference in Greek thought to an overtly teleological view of things, and it is of course very closely in line with the position taken by Socrates in the *Phaedo*. Did he set out, in so doing, to criticize what seemed to him a weakness in the Anaxagorean system, as Socrates, on the *Phaedo* account, was soon to do? Or did he see it more as a natural inference to be drawn from the Anaxagorean system, even if Anaxagoras himself never explicitly drew it? The paucity of evidence does not allow us to say with any certainty. Whatever the truth of this, however, the word he has chosen for his principle of intelligence that guarantees the best or fin-

est disposition of things in the world is one involving activity (Aristotle is going to see the full force of this, as we shall find). And specifically a form of activity which involves the process, presumably an everlasting one, of coming to be aware/to appreciate/to know (*noein*) in what way things are best disposed. It will be for others, like Socrates very possibly and Plato quite certainly, to say "best disposed by reference to certain specifiable *tele*", but Diogenes is within an inch of saying it, and may indeed have said it (the tiny number of fragments we have of his views give us nothing like a complete picture of his philosophy).

Anaxagoras, for his part, opts for the word *Nous* to describe his principle of intelligence behind things, and we have already adverted to Socrates' misgivings about his failure to employ it as the basic explanatory factor for the way things are and work. It seems to me equally interesting that Socrates has no comment on Anaxagoras' use of the word *Nous* rather than *Noesis*, especially in view of the fact that this word can only have been chosen deliberately by Diogenes in contradistinction to the one used by Anaxagoras. One possible reason is perhaps that, at a commonsense level, *Nous* (though still, like *Noesis*, ultimately deriving from the "got it" verb *noein*) was more easily conceivable as a transcendental Intelligence not unanalogous to human intelligence, each being easily thinkable of as some sort of substance, since in this case the "active" content of the verb *noein* has faded from the picture. The use of *Noesis*, by contrast, continuing to stress as it does the *act* of ascertainment itself, in the way the verb *noein* does, may have been seen as a hard saying, leaving most people except perhaps proto-Hegelians wondering, The act of ascertainment of Whom or What?

Whatever the reason, Socrates, in the *Phaedo*, stresses a doctrine which in broad terms combines Anaxagoras' *Nous* and Diogenes' teleology. And that in itself, it seems to me, is the beginning of a fascinating story played out over the next two to three generations. Assuming, *argumenti causa*, the not wholly accepted view that from about the *Phaedo* and *Republic 2* onwards, the views of Socrates propounded in the dialogues, apart from those which clearly repeat views propounded in the so-called "aporetic" dialogues, are more likely to reflect the thinking of Plato than of Socrates, we see Plato making use of both Anaxagoras and Diogenes to enormous effect, with both *Nous* and *noesis* playing pivotal roles in his system.

As early as the *Republic* he has a key use for *Nous* in the universe, hypostatized as the *Demiourgos tou ouranou* (530a6) and, in terms of particulars, as the *Demiourgos ton aistheseon* (507c6–7). As for *Noesis*, Plato transforms this, by a powerful philosophical leap of his own, from a cosmic intelligence to that extraordinary act of intellection which characterizes the fourth segment of the Line (*Resp*. 511d8), and it is something much more interesting, I submit, than the "knowledge" (Waterfield) or "understanding" (Grube) that English-language translators take it to be. Given both the context of the argument and the pedigree of the word to date, it makes eminent sense if taken here to mean a coming to recognize/coming to be aware, as it has done from the beginning, a meaning which also happens to fit beautifully with the Platonic doctrine of *anamnesis*. It is, as so often with this locution, the end of a process of searching (one thinks of that early instance in Homer of the pigs becoming aware [*noein*] of having found the truffles they were rooting around for). The philosopher-ruler has, after years of dialectical preparation, got through to, "found" if you like, the Forms, in the way Homer's pigs, after a lot of rooting around, finally got through to the truffles. (As von Fritz has pointed out, following E. Schwyzer, the original meaning of the verb could possibly even have been "to sniff", or, more precisely, "to locate by sniffing"). It is still not knowledge, of course, which is only achievable in the light of the *anypothetos arche*. But it is that all-important, critical breakthrough towards knowledge which is the act of "coming to awareness"/"coming to recognition" of the Forms.

As far as teleology is concerned, it is as integral to the *Republic* and *Timaeus* as it is to the *Phaedo*, and it seems safe to put Plato as well as Socrates into a Diogenean tradition. But there is an important change, it seems to me, between the *Republic* and *Timaeus* on certain details, and it has not as far as I know been discussed in the literature. In the *Republic* the *anypothetos arche* which makes and makes sense of the world, both the world of sense and the Form world, is the Form of the Good; it is not, as one might have expected if Plato were really following Socrates in detail, the Form of the Best (*to ariston* or *to beltiston*, *Phd*. 97d3), or, if he were really following Diogenes in detail, what one might call the Form of the Best Possible (Fr. 3, *hos kallista*). He also combines the overall causality of the Form of the Good, which in context looks (*pace* Vlastos and others) very like efficient

causality – for example, it is said to have "produced" the Sun – with the causal efficacity of a *Doppelgänger*, the Demiurge, who apparently – and surely needlessly – performs exactly the same role.

Whether his friends or students pointed out the anomaly to Plato we do not know, but by the time he comes to write the *Timaeus* some major fine tuning in his metaphysics and cosmology have clearly taken place, with remarkable results. Teleology is still there, as strong as ever, as a bedrock presupposition supporting the system, but we now have only *one* efficient cause of things, the Demiurge. In the tradition of Anaxagoras and the Socrates of the *Phaedo*, he is on a number of occasions characterized simply as *Nous*, and as the Great Artificer he uses the Forms as his paradigms in the structuring of the universe the way philosopher-rulers use the Form of Justice in the structuring of a good society. With one critical change, however: the Form of the Good has vanished, apparently, from the system, never to return.

Or so it seems; one looks in vain for a reference to it in dialogues that most people take to postdate the *Timaeus*, such as the *Philebus* and *Laws*. That it has vanished as a pseudo-efficient cause in competition with the Demiurge is indeed true; any Form in the *Timaeus* is now purely paradigmatic. But it is in fact retained, I would argue, as a paradigm, and as a paradigm that would have been of very great interest to both Diogenes and the Socrates of the *Phaedo*. My evidence is a sentence at 46c7-d1, where Timaeus talks of the subsidiary causes used by the Demiurge in "completing, as far as he (*sc.* the Demiurge) was able, the Form of the Best (*ten...tou aristou idean apotelon*)". From the beginning commentators have tied themselves in knots running away from the obvious sense of these words, talking of his attempts to "complete the character of what is most excellent" (Zeyl), to "achieve the best result that is possible" (Cornford), to "atteindre, dans la mesure du possible, le résultat le meilleur" (Brisson), and so on. But all this is to pass over the implications of the most natural sense of the verb *apotelein*, which is "to complete" or "to bring to completion". If this is what Timaeus had in mind, and I suspect he did, we are left with the fascinating possibility that in the *Timaeus* Plato is claiming that the real is *incomplete* unless the Forms get instantiated, and that one of the features he most wishes to say the world enjoys – the feature, that is, of being the *best* possible world the Demiurge could have created – will be such by reference to the *Form*

of the Good viewed superlatively. At a stroke he is seen to be unflinchingly grasping, and to be offering an answer – however fraught with difficulties of its own – to the age-old questions, Why a universe at all? Why a universe like this? And could it have been better? And his answers, stamped as they are of course with his own clear and distinct metaphysic, stem categorically from ideas to be found in Anaxagoras, Diogenes, and the Socrates of the *Phaedo*.

But the story is not yet over. The tradition of teleological thinking is taken over by Aristotle in turn, but a crucial part of its significance, not least its significance vis-à-vis what Socrates is discussing in the *Phaedo*, seems to me to have been passed over or even completely misunderstood. In an important passage in the *De Anima* (429a13–20) he says straight out what I have been trying to argue for a while in this paper, and that is that there is in fact a similarity between *to noein* and *to aisthanesthai*. That which *noei* is for him *Nous*, an entity which is – and he tells us he is quoting Anaxagoras here – "unmixed" , since it "*panta noei*" (a phrase hopelessly mistranslated as "thinks all things" by Hicks and beautifully accurately translated most recently by Bodéűs as "saisit tout"). In the realm of intellection *noein* is for Aristotle exactly parallel to *aisthanesthai* in the realm of physical perception; coming to see (*aisthanesthai*) a rainbow and coming to see (*noein*) a fact are clearly analogous processes.

I shall pass over Aristotle's own well-known use of all this in his doctrine of active and passive *nous*, noting simply that, despite differences in detail, it is clearly in the tradition of Anaxagoras, Socrates and Plato – i. e., *nous* is an immaterial substance, of its nature "unmixed" with the physical. It is when he comes to talking about the supreme *Nous,* the Prime Mover, that he says something that has been deemed utterly new and quintessentially Aristotelian, and that is his statement in the *Metaphysics* that the Prime Mover is *Noesis Noeseos*, a phrase universally translated as "A Thinking of Thinking", or "Thinking about Thinking", or something of that order. But this makes little or no sense, in terms of either the philosophical tradition or the linguistic pedigree of the word *noesis*, a word first used, as we saw, to powerful effect in cosmology by Diogenes.

In view of what we have been seeing, a translation of *Noesis Noeseos* as something like "Ascertainment of Ascertainment" or perhaps "A Coming to Awareness of Coming to Awareness" seems much more

likely to be what Aristotle was after. And miraculously, he offers us a splendid clue that this is indeed his intention, since he makes it clear in one of the passages describing the activities of *Nous* that for him "coming to know" is an activity describable by three words which are for him synonymous – *mathein* (one thinks of Plato's *megiston mathema*), *heurein*, and *noein* (429b9). If we go back to Homer's pigs in search of truffles, they learn (*mathein*) finally where the truffles lie, they discover them (*heurein*), they come to be aware (*noein*) of where they are located. On a slightly more elevated level the Prime Mover, says Aristotle, is an eternal act of *self*-discovery, of *self*-awareness, of *self*-recognition.

Once this is appreciated, we can see at once both the brilliant originality of Aristotle and the tradition he is clearly coming from. From Xenophanes he takes the notion that God is an immaterial substance who, being unbound by matter, *oulos noei,* "becomes aware <of things> in his totality". From Anaxagoras he draws, as did the Socrates of the *Phaedo*, a doctrine of cosmic *Nous*, but this time with so strong an emphasis on the lack of distinction in God between essence and activity that his most precise characterization of such *Nous* is *Noesis Noeseos*, a phrase which, as we have seen, has its origins in Diogenes. The teleology he adopts, by contrast, is of the fairly weak form found in Platonic dialogues other than the *Timaeus* (i e., a teleology operating in terms of the good rather than the best, still less the best possible).

We can now finally return to the Socrates of the *Phaedo*. On the assumption that this Socrates really is the historical Socrates (and who could deny that it is and will always remain an assumption?), we are now in a position, I hope, to claim that the stance he adopts here as being his own as a young man is in fact a cross-roads position in Greek thought, in which two central ideas among his predecessors, that of *Nous* and that of teleological presuppositions in cosmology and natural philosophy in general, are taken up by him and transformed into something uniquely his own while still retaining the stamp of the precursor doctrines. His own view, along with the views of those from whom he drew his inspiration, is in its turn transformed by Plato, in the *Timaeus* in particular, into a unique system of his own, and Aristotle does likewise with the concept of *Noesis Noeseos* in the *Metaphysics*. It is not often, it seems to me, that a couple of ideas have

proved so fruitful over such a short span of time in the history of philosophy, and in ways that have not, in my estimation, been fully appreciated, or even indeed understood. This short paper has been my attempt to set the record straight on the matter.

11. Socrates the Lover

Is Socrates, via Diotima, suggesting in the *Symposium* that, once the *scala perfectionis* is scaled, the boy-love has been jettisoned by the lover, or did Socrates believe that a virtue-driven love relationship with a younger male is a condition of the life of a *philosophos*? I ask the question on two grounds:

1. because, *prima facie*, the text makes it look as though the philosopher, having climbed the ladder, is all alone, and this is how most people have understood it, from early church fathers to Spanish mystics to some modern commentators;
2. because Professor Reeve thinks, and I believe with some reason, there is reason for doubting this interpretation, or at any rate for doubting it as an interpretation of what *Socrates* thought.

What has turned off many readers of Diotima's speech is the feeling that the boy-love looks to be merely an indispensable condition for the philosopher's achievement of his goal – a goal perceived at best through a glass darkly till he finally achieves it – and that is, union with the Form Beauty. This feeling seems to be reinforced when we notice Diotima spelling out the indispensable condition in a very particular way as "thanks to boy-loving in the right way". The entire stress in the phrase is on the activity of the lover, and the need for that activity to be appropriate if the goal is to be reached. And what is appropriate? Well, any *sexual* relationship with the boy-love, as Alcibiades discovered, is out of the question; intercourse, if it can be so called, is strictly spiritual. Pregnant in soul, our *philosophos* seeks to find someone who is *kalos* in body and, best of all, *kalos* in body and soul (209b7), and having found him, to bring to birth *en toi kaloi* what he is pregnant with, and that is "*phronesis* and the rest of virtue" (209a3–4). Tempting as it is to see here a picture of one mind impregnating another mind, that does not seem to be Socrates' purpose. The philosopher's mind, as the word "pregnant" *(enkymon)* makes very clear, is to be understood as a female element (as also at 210a7, where the philosopher "brings to birth" *kaloi logoi*), and the relationship with the boy-love one in which the process of bringing a foetus to birth is triggered off. (The picture is slightly strange, as we are sup-

posed to imagine the lover's soul as containing a fertilized egg, so to speak, that is suspended from further development till "triggered" into this by a process that Diotima will go on to describe). This process begins the minute they meet *(euthys)*, and is strictly verbal: the philosopher is galvanized into formulating *logoi* to the boy-love about virtue and what is involved in the becoming of a good man, and in so doing he begins the task of the boy's moral education (209bc).

Having said this, Diotima switches the optic, almost in mid-sentence, from education to parenting. Lover and boy-love are now talked of as jointly caring for the welfare of "the" off-spring. The phrase "their" offspring is – I think carefully – avoided, to reinforce the point that this particular child has no human father.

How long is this nurturing supposed to last? On the face of it, not very long; our philosopher, ever in search of the truly beautiful, will soon be turning his gaze to other *kala somata,* and other beautiful souls, before moving on to *kala epitedeumata* and the rest. But this first impression is again misleading. The educational process continues, except that it is now seen as bilateral; what had begun as a process of education of the boy-love is now seen to be an ongoing process of *self*-education of the lover, as he broadens his gaze to *kala somata* in general, beautiful souls in general, *kala epitedeumata* and the like, till finally he comes to gaze upon the Form Beauty. And each new stage in his ever-broadening search serves as the trigger-mechanism for his bringing to birth yet more "*kaloi, megaloprepeis logoi*" (210d5), and "*dianoemata en philosophiai aphthonoi*" (210d5–6), until he finally comes to see and know the Form Beauty, the reason for all his toilings to that date (210de).

Our philosopher and his boy-love have now, it seems, quite a family of virtues, but the philosopher remains a single parent. These virtues, as they come along, are of ever-increasing depth and complexity, but they share one crucial characteristic: they are what Socrates/Plato will call in other dialogues "popular" rather than "philosophical" virtues. Once the Form Beauty is seen, however, and appreciated for what it is, Diotima suggests strongly that the educational (and self-educational) process is over, and the boy-love *qua* boy-love leaves the picture. I say *qua* boy-love, because something else could well be happening, and it has a lot to do with the difference between popular and philosophical virtue. As Diotima puts it (212a), before he gets to see

the Form Beauty our philosopher has managed to produce only images (*eidola)* of virtue, because he has been in touch with only *eidola* of beauty, ranging from the beauty of the soul and possibly body of his boy-love to *kala epitedeumata* and the like. But once his gaze is fixed on unmediated Beauty, all need for *eidola,* and for the presence of a boy-love, vanishes, or so it seems.

Does this mean that the boy-love is jettisoned after all, even if only at the end of a possibly lengthy period of time? It is fairly easy to infer it from Diotima's final words on *eidola,* but Prof. Reeve does rightly in cautioning us not to assume it. He may well disappear *qua* boy-love but, if he has been well trained by his lover, he may have had a sound enough moral education to begin his own process of *paiderastein orthos* (211b). And any relationship with the former lover from that point on will be grounded on what was there from the beginning, *philia.* Or so one might surmise. But Plato, if not Socrates, seems to have thought differently.

It is here, I think, that we can start to see the Diotima speech as a programme for philosophical education that had much in it that appealed to Plato (and possibly, at least in part, to the historical Socrates). Because it has in it what seem to be the beginnings of the Theory of Forms, and an apparent distinction between philosophical and popular virtue. And the notion of the philosopher as pregnant will be also repeated in the *Republic.* But it is also apparently self-contained as a theory, in that it does not seem to need, or receive, the support of any doctrine of reminiscence. Once the *erastes* has contacted the Form Beauty he presumably leaves behind a boy-love who is himself pregnant with "*phronesis* and the rest of virtue", and the process of philosophy will continue on to another generation, and so on.

How, one might well ask, does the boy-love get impregnated with *phronesis* and the rest by a lover described in detail as a female principle? Here I can only surmise that Diotima is making an at any rate logical distinction between the lover *qua* lover and the lover *qua* educator of the boy-love, and is able to do so by a nice ambiguity in the words *tiktein* and *gennan. Qua* lover he is pregnant of virtue, and the boy's beauty of soul (and, optimally, body) stimulates him to bring to birth *(gennan, tiktein)* the foetus his soul is carrying. *Qua* educator of the boy-love, however he impregnates *(gennan,* 209b3) the soul of the

boy-love in turn, such that he, in due time, will begin the process all over again, this time as a lover.

What is interesting to many readers, particularly in our own times, about Diotima's view, and what I suspect was especially attractive to Socrates, is that, with appropriate reservations, the process can be seen as possessing a self-containment that seemed to him to be of the essence of good philosophizing. While what looks like an incipient Theory of Forms is part of it, there is no hint of two items that appear to be integral to it in its full-fledged form later on, and that is the doctrine of reminiscence and the doctrine of immortality. And that may well be a reason why her views, while possibly liked in large measure by Socrates, may have been less than fully acceptable to Plato. If the *Apology* is a slightly more reliable source than the *Phaedo* for information on the historical Socrates, Socrates felt he knew little about the details of an after-life, and showed no signs of any belief in immortality. For Plato, by contrast, this latter seems to have been an imperative, along with the doctrine of reminiscence that accompanies it.

On the strength of this, Plato over the next several years builds up a mighty system of his own. What constitutes sound philosophical practice, however, deviates apparently very little from the paradigm of such practice laid down by Diotima. In each instance philosophical progress involves a dialectical meeting of loving souls, accompanied and transcended by an even deeper love of *phronesis* and *arete,* and in each instance a natural end to the process is reached when one of the two leaves this love-relationship behind to engage in a new love-relationship, now described as "*he hos alethos mixis",* with the Form Beauty/the Form of the Good. In each instance, too, the relationship, while involving men who are clearly thought of as being homosexual in inclination, is in no way expected to be physically consummated, and it is one for which any metaphorical descriptions are also invariably totally *hetero*-sexual. The quality of virtue achieved is also, till the time of the final revelation, invariably what is to be called "popular" rather than "philosophical".

I said the above "deviates apparently very little" from the paradigm laid down by Diotima, but that deviation is still the difference, it seems to me, between two significantly differing visions of what constitutes progress in philosophy. According to the one (which I shall call Plato's, despite some small overlap), the lover is pregnant in soul

thanks to an antecedent vision of the Forms. According to the other (which I shall call Socrates', again despite some overlap), the cause of the pregnancy is the antecedent teaching of an older lover. According to the one, immortality is achieved by the individual soul, along with, perhaps, in optimal circumstances, the everlasting continuance in time of philosophical education of boy-loves by lovers; according to the other, only the latter process, or a variant of it along the lines of Socrates' own conduct, seems to be envisaged as a goal.

It is the difference, in a word, between an other-worldly vision of philosophical progress and one more firmly grounded in this one, and which of the two we favor will no doubt turn a good deal on where we stand on this. But it is perhaps worth stressing that in each instance it is philosophical progress which is in question, each being assumed to be an achievable goal. And at that point we run into problems with both accounts. In the case of Diotima (Socrates?) the silence as to what happens next is palpable, and we are left to guess that *philia* continues to carry the day as self-educating *erastai* become fully-fledged *philosophoi*. But the continuance of any process of dialectic seems to be out of the question, since once the final vision has been achieved by the *erastes* his philosophical self-education appears to have come to an end. If it be imagined that the vision of the Beautiful might impregnate his soul once more, re-starting the philosophical process Diotima describes, this seems precluded by her clear view that those involved in this are invariably still searchers, and invariably still in the world of images.

Plato faces the same problem in the *Republic,* as many have noticed. The philosopher-ruler's instinct is to stay contemplating on the mountain-top, and he/she needs prodding to return to his/her educational duties in the cave. But the problem, it seems to me, is strictly Plato's own. My own inclination is to believe that for Socrates, following Diotima in part but only in part, the philosophical process and the attainment of its goal are one not two. It is a process involving a love by an older male for a younger one which, as Professor Reeve has emphasized, is invariably accompanied and transcended by an even greater love for the bringing to birth of *phronesis* and *arete* in an environment of beauty (*en toi kaloi)*. And while the process involves great efforts to attain true opinions and the maximum of virtue, the "ignorant" Socrates is always fully aware that it is the realm of opinion and

"popular" virtue in which the lover of philosophy must work; a realm of "knowledge" is out of the question. It is a realm where *aporia* is a constant; but also a realm in which such *aporia* is seen, not as a sign of failure, but as an indication that one is on the right track. It is not, I think, a view which Plato could in the final analysis tolerate without the further underpinnings of a metaphysic of his own; but it is for many a hallmark of *Socrates'* greatness.

Let me conclude with a brief reference to the *Phaedrus,* where, in a famous passage on the difference between spoken and written discourse, Socrates (Plato?) returns to the question of how the lover-*dialektikos* operates (276e–277a). Here, unequivocally, he is said to set out to find another soul within which to "plant" and "sow" *logoi* conjoined with *episteme* (see also 276e5), which, precisely because, we must assume, they *are* conjoined with *episteme,* are *fertile logoi.* As such, he goes on to say, they are valuable to both him who sows them and to "themselves", in the sense of containing within themselves the seed *(sperma)* necessary for the continuance of the process after the *eromenos* becomes himself an *erastes,* a process described as immortal *(athanaton).* That Plato should have placed these words in the mouth of Socrates, even in a dialogue almost certainly much later in composition than the *Symposium,* might well be significant, since it does seem to catch the notion that for Socrates at any rate the dialectical circle is apparently a closed one, any immortality that is achieved by mortals being the linear, physical brand of immortality (read: everlastingness) of generations of *erastai* and *eromenoi* performing their respective roles in partnerships of love and moral education. As such the view is in tension with the doctrine of the unequivocal immortality of the *individual* human soul apparently espoused in the same dialogue, along with a doctrine of Forms and their recollection, where the *telos* of philosophy is precisely to *break* – eventually – from the dialectical circle to a life of eternal, solitary, and blissful contemplation of the Forms elsewhere. The tension, as in the *Symposium,* may well be the tension between the Socratic and the Platonic vision of the philosophical enterprise, and, in this instance as in that, we are left with an interesting challenge as to which is the more choiceworthy. With the rise of Christianity, Plato's version has, historically, tended to prevail. In our own times, the Socratic version has come into its own. Which of the two, if either, will or ought to win the day remains a matter for speculation.

12. The Defining Features of Mind-Body Dualism in the Writings of Plato[1]

The works of Plato are unique on a number of counts, not the least of these being that they contain the first fully articulated account of the relationship between soul (*psyche*) and body (*soma*) in Western literature. The picture that emerges is not without its complexities not to say apparent self-contradictions; so we might usefully begin our examination with a brief, scene-setting discussion of what we know of the two notions before Plato's time.

Notoriously, for the early Greeks (as portrayed for instance in the works of Homer) the body constituted one's "real" self. One's life-principle (literally "life", *psyche*) may have been held to be different from the body, and even to survive the death of that body, but this was small consolation; what survived did so in a miserable and undesirable state in Hades, whatever the virtue of one's life on earth. By the sixth century, with the advent of Orphism into certain sectors of Greek thinking, the *psyche* was starting to be seen as having a better claim than body to the title of one's real self. Not only was it held to survive the body, it was deemed to be that whereby we are both physically alive and also alive as rational and hence responsible agents.[2] And its ontological status was such that it was the potential subject of eternal reward or punishment for the quality of life lived, bodily existence being relegated to the status of some sort of temporal way-station.[3]

While Orphism was regarded by many as the religion of the poor, and its promises of satisfaction hereafter some sort of proto-Marxian opium of the people, it did in fact have a number of sympathizers among the intelligentsia, including Pindar, Empedocles and Socrates. It seems clear, for example, that Socrates too thought soul had a stronger claim than did body to the title of our real self, so much so that he seems to have held that our self and our soul are one and the same.[4] As such, the soul was for Socrates self-evidently more *important* than the body, and for that reason a natural object of much greater *care* than the body. Indeed, "the care of the soul" has been defined as the very heart of Socrates' philosophy.[5] As for its nature, he seems to have

agreed with the Orphics, Pythagoreans, Heraclitus and others that the soul is the ground of our rational and moral as well as our biological self.[6]

On the detail of his thinking about the soul-body relationship there is some unclarity. At one point[7] he talks, apparently approvingly, of having heard a philosopher say that the body is the "tomb" of the soul. As I have put it elsewhere, "According to this view the soul is undoubtedly meant to be the real self, with the body serving only as a shell. As a doctrine it is fairly consistent, for 'desires' are attributed to the soul alone; the body is treated as literally 'dead weight' (*tethnamen*) and apparently plays no part in the operations of the person as such".[8]

Elsewhere[9] he talks of the body's being a possession of the soul. It does not appear however that he is talking about arithmetical possession, in the way that a violinist possesses a violin, but something closer to biological possession, in the way that a violinist possesses a *hand* that manipulates the violin. The argument as we have it however is not wholly clear,[10] and *Alcibiades 1* is in addition only doubtfully a Platonic dialogue. Fortunately, Socrates returns to the notion in a dialogue that is undoubtedly Platonic, the *Charmides*. And here he if anything goes further than he does in *Alc. 1*. If I may quote from an earlier account:[11]

> "At *Charmides* 156d ff. we have a discussion concerning health, where Socrates propounds views which he claims to have learned from a doctor who had served the Thracian king, Zalmoxis. The passage is worth quoting in full:
>
> 'This Thracian told me that in these notions of theirs, which I was just now mentioning, the Greek physicians are quite right as far as they go, but Zalmoxis, he added, our king, who is also a god, says further "that as you ought not to attempt to cure the eyes without the head, or the head without the body, so neither ought you to attempt to cure the body without the soul. And this", he said, "is the reason why the cure of many diseases is unknown to the physicians of Hellas, because they disregard the whole, which ought to be studied also, for the part can never be well unless the whole is well". For all good and evil, whether in the body or the whole man, originates, as he declared, in the soul, and overflows from thence, as if from the head into the eyes. And therefore if the head and body are to be well, you must begin by curing the soul – that is the first and essential thing'.

> What is one to make of the concept of soul as it seems to emerge from this passage? If the Thracian doctor's language is meant to be anything like exact, the relationship of soul and body is clearly not one of simple numerical addition, the combination equalling the self or complete person. The key to the relationship (and to the concept of soul itself) seems to be in the phrase "because they disregard the whole". This "whole" could conceivably refer to either (a) the whole *body* or (b) the whole *person*, that is body and soul combined.
>
> If (a) is the case, Greek doctors are being castigated for despising courses in general physiology; they fail to realize that ailments of particular organs can only be adequately diagnosed in the light of a more general appreciation of the operations of the human body as a whole. However, this hardly squares with the sentences immediately preceding and immediately following, in which clear allusion to 'soul' occurs. So the reference is presumably to (b), and the doctors are being taken to task for failing to appreciate that many ailments are in fact (as we would now say) psychosomatic; potions and poultices will do little to cure the stomach-cramp that stems from overpowering guilt-feelings or anxiety, and the physiotherapist should know when to give way gracefully to the psychiatrist.
>
> This, if true, is a piece of medical insight antedating a good deal of supposedly modern findings in the field of psychology, but the notion of soul which it seems to entail appears at least as remarkable in its acuteness. For not only is 'soul' being claimed to be the whole person, the relation between soul and body is apparently being claimed to be that of whole to part (in the particular sense, it seems, of biological whole to biological part, such as head to eye, or body to head)".

The relationship is in effect one of entailment, and much closer to a monistic account of the soul-body relationship than to a dualistic one. And if the notion of (living) body makes no sense except within the broader context of the soul of which it forms a part, in the way that a living eye (as distinct from a preserved museum-piece) makes no sense except in the broader context of the head of which *it* forms a part, the conclusion also seems to follow that the "broader contexts" in question should be the first concern of investigators, at the risk of putting the cart before the horse if they do otherwise. In the case of medical practice, the approach must be, as we would now say, holistic, the *holon* ("whole") in question being the soul of which body forms a part; or to put it in Socrates' own direct terms, to cure the *soul*, he says (157a1 ff.), will be an indispensable preliminary to any curing of the *body*.

The view is, on the face of it, unique and remarkable; and the type of monism it appears to espouse reverses the normal description (in which *body* is the universally accepted context into which *mind* somehow has to be fitted) and offers us an astonishing alternative, rich in possibilities. Unfortunately, Socrates (or Plato) either failed to see these possibilities or rejected them in favour of those stemming from an alternate, more overtly dualistic theory. Certainly, but for one possible analogy at the cosmological level in the *Timaeus*,[12] the notion never recurs in the dialogues.

Whether any single one of the above views was those of the historical Socrates we do not know. To me the fact that Plato ascribes all three at different times to Socrates suggests that Socrates himself had some difficulty grappling with the problem, offering various tentative solutions – ranging from the purest (arithmetical) dualism of *Gorgias* 493a1–5 to the mitigated dualism of *Alcibiades 1* (if it is a genuine Platonic dialogue) to the uniquely formulated monism of the *Charmides* – at different times in his discussions. Of the three the first, however, is likely to have been the dominant one, if the evidence from the myth of the *Gorgias* is to be counted as firm evidence of the views of Socrates himself.[13] Here the soul in the after-life is in effect a "counter-person", enjoying all other characteristics of the person in this life except materiality. As such, it is the fully autonomous soul-as-self of the *Protagoras*, a soul that may in space-time periodically "possess" a physical body but for which a physical body is no more *part* of it than a violin is "part" of a violinist. It is also, it seems, *itself alive*, as well as being a *principle* of life, and the life it possesses may also possibly have been thought by Socrates – following again an Orphic pattern of thought – to be either very long-lasting or even eternal.[14]

The word "possibly" needs to be stressed here because the Socrates of the *Apology* comes across as agnostic in the matter of an after-life. If this is the genuine Socrates talking, references in other dialogues to an after-life may be to an aspect of Orphism accepted (apparently) by Plato rather than by Socrates himself. On the other hand, there is nothing intrinsically unlikely about Socrates' having himself wavered over the matter, expressing different views at different times; and in this he would not have been the last great philosopher to do so.

As far as the soul's and the body's well-being or otherwise is concerned, each, he says in the *Gorgias*, can be characterized by genuine

health, pseudo-health, or sickness, a good doctor being needed to cure the pseudo-health or sickness of the body, a good judge or legislator to cure the pseudo-health or sickness of the soul. The term he uses for those performing the latter service – *psychiatroi* ("healers of the *psyche*") – is a striking neologism, and has of course taken on a brand new life in our own time.

As for what constitutes the specific sickness of the soul, this, he says, is *vice*, whose cure will be brought about by repressing the *soul's* unsound desires in the way a sick body is cured by the reining in of *its* unsound desires. Sometimes, he says, this may involve drastic measures, such as cautery or surgery, the cautery or surgery for the soul consisting of the heaviest penalties of the *law*.

There are, I think, a number of interesting features about this view. The first is its apparent assumption of a parallelism between soul and body in structure and activities that *prima facie* runs counter to the asymmetry apparently involved in any theory of soul alone as being the real person. The second is its apparent assumption that *both* soul and body are characterized by "desires" of various types, so much so that it could be dubbed an early version of the "double-person" theory of the individual (by contrast with the "person with an instrument" theory). The third is the assumption, common also to the "person with an instrument" theory, that the soul is the ground of our moral/social/political activity. And the fourth is the notion that "repression" of certain desires of the soul is valuable therapy.

The *Gorgias* is, by common admission among scholars, a dialogue written very near the end of Plato's "Socratic" period, and it is possible that many of the above ideas are in fact his own or, if not that, at any rate adumbrations of his own. However this may be, in the *Phaedo*, written shortly after the *Gorgias* and at the beginning of Plato's so-called metaphysical period, we see, I think, the first clear instance of Plato *himself* grappling with the heritage of Socrates on the question of soul and body. The dramatic setting is Socrates' death-cell, during the last hours leading up to his drinking of the hemlock. Simmias and Cebes, Socrates' main interlocutors, are astonished at his cheerfulness in face of death, and equally astonished at his reason for such cheerfulness: that is, his conviction that his real self – his soul – will survive his bodily death and live on in the state of happiness that is the reward for a life of virtue. Under questioning, Socrates makes it

clear that his Orphism, if that is what it is, involves reason as well as simply faith, and a whole series of arguments is set forth to demonstrate, as far as it seems to him possible, that the soul which survives is in fact immortal. The arguments as such, while fascinating, can be passed over here. More important are the many notions of soul that emerge from the dialogue, and some of the problems that they generate.

Socrates' early remarks suggest that he sees the soul as some sort of "inner person" distinct from the body and reacting in various ways to it. So bodily sensation is said to "trouble" the soul, which should do its best to "avoid" it, "bid farewell" to it and "become alone and by itself". The trouble caused by the body is largely in the cognitive and moral sphere. Among the evils of the body, for example, that Socrates mentions are its "folly" and "stupidity", which must be combatted by a soul that he clearly sees as being among other things a principle of cognition (he goes so far at one point as to call it "intelligence" in a context where the word soul itself would have been a perfectly appropriate locution). That it is also a potential source of moral harm to the soul emerges with clarity when he talks of it as "contaminating" the soul by its presence, "filling it up with its lusts" and "bewitching it with its passions and pleasures".

Some of these thoughts are of course very much in line with what has emerged in earlier dialogues: soul and body are distinct substances, the soul is one's real self, the soul is our source of cognitive and moral activity. Receiving somewhat heavier stress is the notion of the body as an active agent for harm in the body-soul nexus. It is no longer apparently a "possession" in the neutral way in which an instrument, say, is a possession, but rather something more akin to a counter-person, with its own peculiar pleasures, pains and desires, all of them at best a nuisance to the soul and at worst something likely to cause significant harm. At one point it is summed up and roundly written off as "evil".

This is in fact a much stronger version of what was earlier on, in discussion of the *Gorgias*, called the "double-person" theory of the individual. What makes it stronger? The first thing is its stress on the soul as being as much a cognitive agent as a moral agent, though given the generally intellectualist tone of Socratic moral theory perhaps not too much should be made of this. The second, and more important thing is the sense of all-out warfare between soul and body and the

interests of soul and body; they are no longer viewed as being simply interestingly analogous in their structure and activities. The warfare, it should be added, is seen as being literally to the death; soul will only achieve the life that is authentically its own when finally separated from the body. Meantime, the truly good and just individual will do his utmost to live as though not possessing a body at all.

This somewhat dispiriting but historically very influential view of the body-soul relationship is the one that most people carry away from a first reading of the *Phaedo*, and it is true that it is indeed the dominant view in the dialogue. It does however sit side by side with other, in many ways conflicting versions of the soul-body relationship that Plato seems content for the moment to leave unreconciled. At one point in the discussion, for example, he quotes with apparent approval the Orphic doctrine of the body as being a prison-house for the soul (82e2 ff.), a notion analogous to the earlier notion of the body as being a simple physical possession, though now with greater stress on its power to constrain. Elsewhere he talks of the soul in ways suggesting some sort of ectoplasmic fluid permeating and coextensive with the body, an entity which if sufficiently "contaminated" and "infected" by the body may return to earth later as what most people call a ghost. And elsewhere still (specifically in the first and final arguments for immortality) he talks of soul strictly in terms of its being a life-principle or life-carrier; any "personal" features it may have are for purposes of the arguments in question ignored.

As Dodds once said, "the Classical Age inherited a whole series of inconsistent pictures of the 'soul' or 'self'",[15] and a good number of these seem to have found their way into the *Phaedo*. 1) On the one hand soul is strongly argued to be wholly immaterial, and analogous in this regard to the transcendental Forms; on the other hand the description of it in ectoplasmic terms seems to be a carryover from an earlier age when it was thought of in more overtly physicalist terms. 2) On the one hand it is strongly argued to be strictly a unity, without parts, and immune to change, again analogous in this regard to the transcendental Forms; on the other hand it is seen as our most genuine self, complete with all the complexity and change that go with cognition, desire, decision-making, and a whole range of potential pains and pleasures. 3) On the one hand it is seen as twinned, unnaturally, for an earthly lifetime with a body that is in most respects inimical to its true

happiness and interests, which lie in a discarnate, immaterial existence elsewhere; on the other hand, as a life-principle it seems to have as its very essence the animating of the physical. And 4), on the one hand the soul and the self are said to be one and the same; on the other hand Socrates talks – possibly loosely – on occasion as though both body *and* soul are the possessions of a third entity which – whatever it is – is the *genuine* self.

These varying notions of soul are on the face of it not easy to reconcile, but the problem of their reconciliation – if he saw it as a problem – was clearly for Plato of less importance than the main points he was at pains to reinforce, summarizable as follows. Soul is by its nature of greater importance than body in the body-soul nexus; there is an overriding need to care for our genuine self – the soul – over our would-be self – the body; the same soul that is life-principle/life-carrier is also itself alive – a person constituting the genuine self and endowed with cognitive faculties and moral sensibility; and the happiness of the soul lies not in anything provided by the world of space-time, but in eternal contemplation of the transcendental Forms.

The conclusion of all this is that for the Socrates of the *Phaedo* the soul-body relationship is in essence *unnatural*. Evidence for this he finds in what seem to him the divergence, and in many instances out-and-out conflict between "bodily" desires (for food, drink and sex) and the desires of the soul (for knowledge and goodness), and between "bodily" pains and pleasures (attaching to the above-mentioned bodily desires) and the pains and pleasures of the soul (attaching to the above-mentioned desires of the soul). There is no conflict within soul as such, because soul is a simple substance; "inner" conflict is invariably between body and soul.

In so writing, Plato is at the outer limit of psychological dualism; in no other dialogue does he express himself in such stark and uncompromising terms about the relationship of soul and body. The degree to which he himself, at the time of writing the dialogue, believed such trenchant dualism to be a genuine description of what is the case or the degree to which it served the *dramatic* purpose of accounting for Socrates' cheerfulness in the face of death will never be known. But one thing we do know. In the dialogue almost certainly immediately subsequent to the *Phaedo* – the *Republic* – he has already moved on to

a much more sophisticated description of the soul-body relationship. And to that dialogue we now turn.

In the *Republic* many of the senses of soul that emerged in the *Phaedo* recur, but something very new is a description of it as divided into three parts, reason, "spiritedness" and gut desire. With this move Plato has edged aware from that *bi*partition of soul into reason and gut-impulse which (with the exception of one argument in the *Phaedo* based on the assumption of its unity and indivisibility) had characterized his antecedent thinking. Whether however he progressed or regressed in attempting to separate our non-rational impulses into "spiritedness" and gut-desire has divided and will probably continue to divide readers of the dialogue. For many people the "spiritedness" of which he speaks is not obviously distinguishable from the other non-rational desires, despite his attempts to argue to the contrary; and it is not difficult to argue that it is in fact *invented* as the (implausible) counterpart to one item in the well-known (and much more defensible) political analogue of the soul described at length in the *Republic* – the tripartite state. Whatever the case, tripartition of soul has rightly or wrongly come to be thought of by many as one of the core doctrines of Platonism, and some time should be spent examining it.

One immediately striking feature of the theory is the way in which all three parts of the soul are described in semi-autonomous terms; each has its own desires, pleasures and pains, often described in such "personal" detail that one sometimes feels it is a theory of three inner individuals, not of three parts of one substance. On the assumption however that this, like earlier talk of an apparent difference between soul and self,[16] is not to be understood literally, the crucial point emerges that tensions we all feel are not, after all, as the *Phaedo* might have led us to suppose, tensions between soul and body but tensions *within the soul itself* (a point, as it happens, adumbrated in the *Gorgias* [493a1–5], and to which Plato now returns).

Along with this restatement of earlier theory on the nature of our tensions (a statement couched originally in terms of bipartition rather than tripartition of soul, but still the same statement) comes an apparent revaluation of the parts of the soul in terms of the role they each perform. While on the one hand Plato is still prepared to say, early on in the dialogue (before the new theory of tripartition has in fact been mentioned), that "in an individual's soul one element is better one

worse" (431a4–5), by Book 9, when his tripartite psychology has been fully articulated, all three parts of soul are now fully recognized as possessing a necessary and worthwhile role in the sound functioning of the whole (586e4–587a1).

A final and critical feature of his reassessed psychology, and a feature as it happens that was also foreshadowed in the *Gorgias*, is his apparent abandonment of *Phaedo* theory in the whole matter of what constitutes *health* of soul and body. For health – seen as a core metaphor for Justice – is now carefully described, along the lines of contemporary Greek medicine, as a balance of items within the organism, be that organism the body or the soul. Expressing himself in the scrupulously functionalist and teleological terms elaborated at the end of Book 1, Socrates describes how the right functioning (= health) of the body involves the right functioning of each of the parts composing it; in his own terminology, each part does the job it is meant to do. In like manner, in the just (= healthy) soul health/justice consists in each of the three parts of soul doing the job it is meant to do.

If the rational part of the soul is still for Plato very much the most important part, and possibly the only part that is immaterial and immortal,[17] the necessary role of the other two parts *ici bas* has taken Plato a giant step beyond views earlier on propounded in the *Phaedo*. The body is now no longer viewed as some sort of material counter-person, complete with desires of its own, in opposition to the immaterial person that is the soul. *All* desires are in fact, says Plato, a feature of the *soul*; though many of these will be correctly described as operating *via* the body. And all such desires, if correctly canalized, can be directed to serve the ends of our rational – and ultimately most genuine – selves.

Such canalization, it turns out, is very much a feature of what Plato means by education. This, not surprisingly, consists of whatever techniques seem necessary to bring about and maintain balance among the items comprising the body, balance among the parts comprising the soul, and balance – not warfare – *between* soul and body. Plato has moved, it seems, as far away from the *Phaedo* position as one can possibly move, while still calling oneself a psycho-physical dualist.

While that is broadly speaking true, it remains true in regard to only one aspect, albeit a critical one, of Plato's overall theory of soul and body. Other features of the theory have not noticeably changed.

Soul and body continue to be thought of as really, not simply logically distinct; their putative "addition" would continue to make two. The one continues to be in both the long and the short run more important than the other, despite the revaluation of drives associated with the bodily condition; even physical education is said to be only incidentally for the good of the body, and primarily – in conjunction with *mousike* – for the good of the *soul*.[18] And in yet another attempt at proving soul's immortality (608c ff.), in which – given so much that was said in the *Phaedo* – one might have expected a clear statement that it is only soul-as-*reason* which is in fact immortal, the discussion is peculiarly unclear; still unwilling perhaps to jettison the Orphic view of soul as being a complete person in the life beyond, not just a disembodied intellect, Plato offers an argument of possibly studied ambiguity, in which it has proved very difficult to be sure whether he believes that what survives as a unity is merely soul-as-reason or whether he believes that it is some unified entity comprising within it in some non-material manner all that constituted what was once the tripartite soul.[19] In a word, despite the palpable progress, in the *Republic*, in Plato's thinking about the soul, many facets of the problem of its nature, constitution and relationship to the body still remain, by the dialogue's end, in a state of (possibly intentional) ambiguity.

Ambiguity is not however radical doubt, and in the *Timaeus*, which I now think to be a dialogue written near the beginning of Plato's final period of writing,[20] he returns to the topic of soul on a grand scale, arguing at length that all living things are by definition ensouled, and since the cosmos is a living thing, it too must be ensouled. The latter hypothesis is an intriguing one, and cannot be discussed here, except in passing. As far as human soul is concerned, it is again said to be tripartite, and again apparently, to judge from the wealth of political metaphors drawn directly from the *Republic* discussion, by reference to the same political analogue as it had been in the *Republic*. And again the three parts are located in head, thorax and belly respectively.

But there are some differences worth noticing. There is now no doubt which part of soul survives and is immortal; it is reason alone. And the composition of reason, be it that Reason which constitutes the totality of World Soul or the reasoning part of human soul, is now described as being in some measure *material*. The move is on the face

of it a paradoxical one, given Plato's earlier concerns, in the *Phaedo* and *Republic*, to stress the complete immateriality of (rational) soul. But it does in fact come to grips with a fundamentally problematic aspect of all theories of so-called "naïve" psycho-physical dualism, and that is the way in which a physical and a wholly non-physical substance are supposed to make contact and cohere. If it could be shown that soul is in some respect immaterial and in some respect also material, one will presumably have done something to minimize that problem. Or so at any rate we can speculate; Plato himself does not confront the problem in quite such terms, but rather in terms of his own basic metaphysics and epistemology. The result however is the same; even our rational, immortal soul is now thought of as being in some respect material, and as a result its immortal life is described as being, not an eternal immaterial existence among the Forms but an everlasting material existence of ensoulment, in space and time, of the stars and planets.

Whether wittingly or unwittingly, Plato appears to have here pulled together two apparently divergent views of soul, the one material the other immaterial, that emerged first in the *Phaedo*, and in such a way as to give credence to both. Fashioned deliberately by the Demiurge in such a way as to possess a) an "intermediate" type of reality between the absolute reality of the transcendental Forms and the semi-reality of objects in space-time, and b) "intermediate" versions of those features of Sameness and Difference which allow us to offer basic epistemological judgments, (rational) soul is now by its very structure shown to have a natural affinity for *both* of Plato's universes, and an ability, under optimal circumstances, to achieve a maximal understanding of each. In the case of the world of Forms, this understanding will be at the level of knowledge; in the case of the world of space-time, at the level of true opinion.

Along with this remarkable clarification of soul's "amphibian" status (a status implicit in Orphic accounts of transmigration but now defended for the first time by Plato as a belief – like the belief in immortality – that is supportable by explicitly philosophical argument) comes an equally remarkable and little-noticed attempt to make overall sense of the fact of ensoulment as such, be it human, animal or vegetal. Passing over (if not explicitly rejecting) standard Orphic accounts of ensoulment as being the result of either some collective

"Fall" or individual sin or both, and picking up on an idea first adumbrated in the Myth of Er (*Resp. 10*) that *we* are responsible for the life we are born into – "God is not to blame" – Plato argues that in the beginning the Demiurge created all souls equal. Though there is some small doubt about the detail of his argument,[21] he appears to say that the first generation of humans created by the Demiurge and his helper-gods was totally male. As they died off and were duly re-incarnated, those among them who had lived a "cowardly" and in more general terms morally unsatisfactory[22] life were reincarnated as women (!); those who had lived at various levels of *stupidity* were reincarnated as various types of bird or animal.

If the above implies what it appears to imply, Plato's researches into the nature of soul and body have led him into a description of the whole of the natural world as being in its various classes (including, it seems, among humans the entire class of women) different instances of what might be called "appropriate degradation" for the housing of the souls of males undergoing punishment of one form or another as described above. It is a bizarre and distressing twist on the theory of transmigration that I have been unable to track down to any clear source, Orphic, Pythagorean, Zoroastrian or Hindu, and hence *faute de mieux* tentatively posit as either Plato's own or possibly that of the renegade Pythagorean Philolaus, on whose (lost) works there is some reason for believing much of the *Timaeus* was based.

What began as a strong statement of the fairness of the Demiurge in regard to all humans has led Plato into very strange terrain, where the problems elicited may well have come to be perceived by him as being perhaps greater than those he thought he was solving. If a particular Serengeti lion is the reincarnation of a particular Masai warrior, does it possess both a lion-soul and the warrior's human soul or only a lion's soul or only the warrior's soul? All answers to the question create problems for one who believes, as any adherent of the doctrine of transmigration must, that a "good" life as a lion (whatever that can possibly mean) warrants a step up on the ladder of lives – to the level of, say, a woman, or a "bad" life as a lion warrants a step down, perhaps to the level of a squirrel or snail.

As for the overall notion of "appropriate degradation", in the case of women this seems to refer to features of both body *and* soul; they are, says Plato elsewhere in the dialogue, less physically strong[23] than

males, and in the immediate context (and elsewhere in the dialogues) he also avers, as we have seen, that they tend in soul towards morally unacceptable behavior, especially cowardice. The conclusion here, as distressing as conclusions drawn above, appears to be that Plato – adopting an unambiguous stance in a controversy that is still with us – thinks that there is a "natural" difference between male and female human souls analogous to the difference in their bodily strength, and the difference is one involving the natural moral superiority of the male. In keeping with earlier Socratic doctrine that the worst thing one can do to a person is to make that person *morally worse* as a person, Plato has now come up with an argument (of sorts) to show that the appropriate punishment for the soul of a man who has demonstrated moral fault is to run the risk – by association – of yet further moral degradation by being incarnated in the body of a creature of intrinsically less moral worth than himself – that of a woman.

It would be easy, but perhaps too easy, to write off the above as being purely "mythical" and nothing that one so sophisticated as Plato could possibly have subscribed to. For in a later dialogue, the *Laws* (944d8-e2), he says, after mentioning how Caeneus of Thessaly had once been a woman but had been transformed by a god into a man, "Were the reverse process, transformation from man to woman, possible, that in a way would be of all penalties the properest for the man who has flung his shield away". Whether or not he is in this statement suggesting a move away from the doctrine of metempsychosis, and in particular the remarkable version of the doctrine to be found in the *Timaeus*, his feelings on women as being creatures of appropriate moral degradation to serve as prison-houses for cowardly males undergoing punishment have clearly in no way changed.[24]

It would, however, be unfortunate to leave the *Timaeus* on such a dispiriting note, since it also happens to be a dialogue in which some remarkably penetrating things on psychosomatic disorder are said. After a brief discussion of bodily ailments, Timaeus continues:

> "Such is the manner in which disorders of the body arise; disorders of the soul caused by the bodily condition arise in the following way. It will be granted that folly is disorder of the soul; and of folly there are two kinds, madness and stupidity. Accordingly, any affection that brings on either of these must be called a disorder; and among the gravest disorders for the soul we must rank excessive pleasures and pains…. For the most part of his life he is maddened by these intense pleasures and pains; and when his

> soul is rendered sick and senseless by the body he is commonly held to be not sick but deliberately bad.
>
> … the truth is that sexual intemperance is a disorder of the soul arising, to a great extent, from the condition of a single substance (the marrow, TMR) which, owing to the porousness of the bones, floods the body with its moisture. We might almost say, indeed, of all that is called incontinence in pleasure, that it is not justly made a reproach, as if men were willingly bad. *No one is willingly bad; the bad man becomes so because of some faulty habit of body and unenlightened upbringing, and these are unwelcome afflictions that come to any man against his will.*
>
> Again, where pains are concerned, the soul likewise derives much badness from the body. When acid and salt phlegms or bilious humours roam about the body and, finding no outlet, are pent up within and fall into confusion by blending the vapour that arises from them with the motion of the soul, they induce all manner of disorders of the soul of greater or lesser intensity and extent. Making their way to the three seats of the soul, according to the region they severally invade, they beget divers types of ill-temper and despondency, of rashness and cowardice, of dullness and oblivion".

After a brief discussion of bad education, familial and political, he concludes, "that is how all of us who are bad become so, through two causes that are altogether against the will. For these the blame must fall upon the parents rather than the offspring, and upon those who give, rather than those who receive, nurture. Nevertheless, a man must use his utmost endeavour, by means of education, pursuits, and study, to escape from badness and lay hold upon its contrary".

It is a remarkable short essay on (to coin a phrase) somato-psychic (as distinct from psycho-somatic) disorder – the first such essay in western writing – and the relationship between such disorder and on-going moral responsibility. It also has the distinction of being, despite its insights and importance, of being very little read, even by those claiming some knowledge of Plato. And close on its heels comes a brief account of psycho-somatic disorder, a portion of which again (of no small interest to those involved in education!) deserves quotation:

> "When the soul is too strong for the body and of ardent temperament, she dislocates the whole frame and fills it with ailments from within; she wastes it away, when she throws herself into study and research; in teaching and controversy, public or private, she inflames and racks its fabric through the rivalries and contentions that arise, *and bringing on rheums deludes most so-called physicians into laying blame on the unoffending part*".

Just how far Plato has apparently come in these matters can be gauged by a brief glance back at the *Gorgias*, where, as we saw, soul and body are viewed as strictly parallel entities, each with its appropriately and meticulously defined states of health and sickness, and each curable in a manner appropriate to its form of sickness, psychic or somatic. If at the time he had views on any putative contact between the two, his silence on the matter is palpable.

Not, of course, that soul and body do not continue to operate for Plato as parallel substances, along with the concomitant claim that of the two one is intrinsically more important than the other (89d4–7). In concluding his discussion of psycho-somatic and somato-psychic disorder, for example, he remarks that the best preventive medicine consists of physical motion or exercise for the body and non-physical exercise (= contemplation) for the soul. It is a doctrine of *mens sana in corpore sano*, and like so much else in these closing passages of the *Timaeus* has become so familiar as to seem simply truistic. But in its day such thinking was a revolution.

In another critical respect Plato's views also appear to have changed with the years, and that is in regard to the very definition of soul itself. In the *Phaedrus*, a dialogue written, I believe, not too long after the *Timaeus*, Plato comes up with a remarkable new definition of (rational) soul as "self-moving motion" (245c-246a). And with this definition – dry and lifeless as it may at first sight appear – he finally, after a lifetime of writing on the general topic, comes to grips with the question that many a sceptical friend must have posed, and that is why "soul" is needed to account for any living thing at all, human or otherwise. Could not the atomists be right all along, all that exists being the transient conjunctions of randomly moving bits of matter in space? In his carefully formulated reply Plato reiterates his view of the causal connection of movement and life, a living thing being distinguished from a non-living one by its power of (in some weak sense of the term) "self-motion". In this all Greeks, however unsophisticated, would have agreed with him. The next argument, however, would have left all but a few of them far behind him, for he then argues that there is a *cause* or trigger for such (misleadingly named) self-movement, and that cause or trigger is the *genuine* self-movement of (*rational*) *soul*.

Such genuine self-movement being for Plato self-evidently without a beginning in time, he then goes on to argue that rational soul is both

immortal and – more significantly, perhaps, in terms of its implications for action – eternal. For up to now Plato had argued that soul had a temporal beginning, indeed that the point in time of its formation by the Demiurge was the first point *of* time. Within this general framework soul was seen as the creation and servant of a god/gods who served as the arbiters of its actions. At a stroke the entire picture is called into question with the new definition, for rational soul is an uncreated entity, it appears, and as eternal as the gods themselves.

As so often, however, in Plato, a new and provocative idea goes hand in hand with a relatively conservative one barely if at all compatible with it. Instead of the expected survey of the possibly explosive implications for action of the newly formulated definition, Plato offers us a famous mythical description of the soul in terms of a charioteer and two horses that is in large measure a repetition of the tripartite-soul theory of the *Republic* and *Timaeus*.[25] And in the same context he describes reincarnation in the time-honoured terms of a fall, though now the world beyond is in fact his own world of Forms; and the incarnate soul itself is described as being like an oyster in a shell, in much the same way as, earlier on, in the *Phaedo*, it had been described as being emprisoned (*Phdr*. 250c6; *Phd*. 82e3). As for conduct, nothing is said to suggest that the new definition of rational soul has changed Plato's basic stance on the matter; our prime concern, in a world where we are told, confusingly, both that "all *soul* has the care of all that is inanimate" (246b6) and that *Zeus* "orders and cares for all things" (246e5–6), our primary obligation remains the care for a morally sound (= "balanced") soul, a soul that is in its rational aspect at any rate our real self. Though even on this latter point we are left by Plato in a state of by now familiar ambiguity. For the discarnate soul of the *Phaedrus* myth looks very much the same as the soul as described in so many other eschatological myths of Plato – that is, a soul where all of its features appear to survive, not just its reason. And Plato, as in previous dialogues, offers no hint of any desire to clarify the situation, or whether indeed he considers clarification desirable. For this we have to wait till the tenth book of what may well have been his last work, the *Laws*.

Here he restates his position, first set out in the *Phaedrus*, that the source of all motion is eternal self-moving soul, but this time the claim has been broadened to cover *all* soul, not simply – as the *Phaedrus*

argument in context appeared to imply – rational soul. It is also stressed that the "movement" in question is not simply the physical movement associated with organic life; the "movements" of soul are now for the first time listed comprehensively as "wish, reflection, foresight, counsel, judgment, true or false, pleasure, pain, hope, fear, hate, love, and whatever kindred or primary motions there might be" (897a1–4).

An ambiguity in the *Phaedrus* concerning its ontological status has been crucially resolved. There, it will be remembered, Plato wrote of soul and Zeus in a manner suggesting that both were independent eternal entities, neither contingent upon some further principle and each of them apparently performing an identically comprehensive "caring" role in the total scheme of things. Now it is clarified that soul, while being self-moving and eternal, is so in a context of eternal dependence for its eternal *genesis* upon a transcendental divine principle. What had appeared at first sight to be a case of the eternally non-contingent status of (rational) soul has now been clarified as the eternally *contingent* status of *all* soul. But even here, to the end, Plato remains teasingly enigmatic. If, as seems at least possible, the transcendental divine principle is itself supposed to be a soul, the universality of his contingency claim is in turn apparently called into question.

This takes us into areas of Platonic metaphysics that would have to be discussed elsewhere, but enough has already been said to make the point that to the end Plato is an explorer in the area of philosophical psychology as in so many other areas of speculation. Nowhere, it seems to me, is this clearer than in the *Laws*, which in terms of his views on soul and body is almost a compendium of the views he has elaborated over a writing lifetime. I say "almost", because the tripartition of soul is a view that only exists now as a set of *disiecta membra* of the original idea; the old *bi*partition into reason and impulse that served Plato so well until the writing of the *Republic* seems to have returned as his favoured model of psychic structure. Apart from that, and of course the remarkable view of soul as self-moving mover first elaborated in the *Phaedrus*, the picture of soul is very much that found in earlier dialogues, where, as I have put it elsewhere, "life is a process of purification (from the body) and assimilation to the divine (716c-e); the soul is the true self and enjoys personal immortality (959b3–4); the just are rewarded in a future life, and there are sanctions reserved for

the wicked; a basic substantial distinction of soul and body is taken for granted, and "pleasures" are once again treated with distrust (672d8–9, 727c1 ff., etc.); and elements in the soul are again unqualifiedly described as being "good" and "bad" (904b2–3), despite the careful revaluation of these views in *Republic 9* and the *Philebus*.

A further view of soul in the *Laws* is worth a mention, and that is the notion that as a life-force it consists of some sort of *Stoff* permeating and guiding the physical universe as a whole and all living entities within it. As such it is ethically and intellectually neutral, only taking on ethical and intellectual colour when it operates "with wisdom as its helper" or when it "companies with folly" (897b1,3). The view is in many ways a slightly refined version of the somewhat ectoplasmic view of soul that first occurred in the *Phaedo*, and it takes its place in the *Laws* as one of a number of competing views that present themselves for our comparative inspection, in much the same way as they first did in the *Phaedo*.

For some readers of Plato this apparent willingness to return to his youthful views, contradictions and all, bypassing so much in the way of careful correction and elucidation that had characterized such dialogues as the *Republic*, *Timaeus* and *Phaedrus*, has been a source of scandal. So much so that one author, finding the whole dialogue a parody of Plato's philosophy, has argued that it is in fact not Plato's work at all.[26] But the conclusion is an extravagant one. Far from working to Plato's disadvantage, the clear unwillingness he shows to reduce to some sort of artificial order a set of concepts of soul that are possibly intrinsically irreconcilable is probably better seen as a sign of his philosophical strength. Certainly, the fact that in some of his middle and later dialogues he made such apparent progress on so many matters suggests that he grew increasingly aware, if he was not aware from the beginning, of some of the problems involved in his earlier formulations of the nature of soul and the nature of the soul-body relationship. That in old age he felt the need to question whether what had seemed progress in those dialogues really *was* so *may* of course be a sign of increasing senile decrepitude on his part. But it seems equally if not more reasonably assignable to a determination on his part, when in doubt, to leave his options open; the determination, in fact, of a man who, whatever the topic, opted to the end to express himself on

the matter in the open-ended form of dialogue not the dogmatic form of treatise.

Nowhere, it seems to me, is this more evident than in a passage at *Laws* 898e8–899a4. Having spent a life-time discussing various aspects of the soul-body relationship, he returns to the topic for one last time, possibly just before his death. Taking the sun as his example of an ensouled object, he mentions three possible ways in which its soul might control its body: from within, as does "our own soul"; from without; or by "guiding" it in some other mysterious way "stripped of body and in possession of other wonderful powers". To the end he is wrestling with the problem that lies at the heart of all psycho-physical dualism, the problem of relating a physical substance to an immaterial one, and to the end he openly admits his bafflement. It is a splendid memorial to his intellectual honesty.

Notes

1 For purposes of this study I shall assume the following: a) that the works of Plato fall into three main groups, characterizable as "Socratic", "middle" and "late"; and b) that the views of soul found in the Socratic group are more or less those of the historical Socrates, those in the latter two groups more or less those of Plato. I have also opted throughout for the older translation of *psyche* as "soul" rather than "mind", the principal reason being that this translation seems to me to better catch the sense of *psyche* as the "person" or "genuine self" that seems to have been what Plato was at some pains to affirm.

2 Heraclitus, frs 107, 118 DK.

3 For a careful study of metempsychosis in early Greek thought and in its non-Greek origins see Walter Burkert, *Lore and science in ancient pythagoreanism* (tr. Edwin L. Minar, Jr.) (Harvard 1972), pp. 120–165.

4 *Alc. 1*, 130c5–6, and (by implication) *Protag.* 313a–b; see T. M. Robinson, *Plato's Psychology*, 2nd edition (Toronto 1995), p. 12. The notion is also clearly affirmed at *Phaedo* 115c and *Resp.* 469d6–9. Alternatively, he may have held that the self consists of the soul using the body as an instrument (*Alc. 1*, 130a1–3); the doubtful status of the dialogue in question however makes it difficult to be sure of this.

5 John Burnet, "The Socratic doctrine of the soul", *Proceedings of the British Academy* 7 (1916), 235 ff.

6 See, e. g., *Euthyd.* 295e4–5, *Charm.* 157a1-b1, *Crito* 47d3–4.

7 *Gorg.* 493a1–5.

8 T. M. Robinson, *Psychology,* p. 16

9 *Alc. 1*, 131a ff.

10 For discussion of the details, see T. M. Robinson, *Psychology,* p. 9.

11 *Ibid.,* pp. 4–5.

12 At *Tim.* 36d–e Plato talks of the world's body as being fitted by the Demiurge within its *soul*, not – as might have been expected – *vice versa*.

13 With the exception of the *Gorgias* and *Protagoras*, the dialogues in which myths figure prominently are commonly considered to be more overtly Platonic in content. Whether such myths were a feature of the conversations of the historical Socrates is very hard to know, but their presence in two major dialogues largely considered to be Socratic in content is to me a small suasion in favour of believing that they were.

14 The notion of the body as a (temporal) tomb for the soul implies at least the soul's greater *longevity* than body; and at *Meno* 86a8-b2 Socrates seems satisfied that the slave's supposed pre-knowledge of geometrical truths is in fact evidence for its immortality.

15 E. R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* (Berkeley 1951), p. 179.

16 See above, p. 122.

17 On this point see however below, p. 125.

18 *Resp.* 411e-412a.

19 In *Plato's Psychology* I have argued for the view that he inclined towards the Orphic view; for the counter-case see R. A. Shiner, "Soul in *Rep.* X, 611", *Apeiron* 6 (1972) 23–30.

20 T. M. Robinson, *Psychology,* pp. xiv–xv.

21 At 90e6–7 he writes in such a way as to suggest that the differentiation into male and female was instituted by the Demiurge at the very beginning; and the same might be said of an earlier passage at 41e-42a. But this seems to be a slip on Plato's part, running clean counter as it does to the general drift of the argument, in which all are given an equal chance at the beginning by the Demiurge (41e4). See also the evidence of 91d7 (*andron*, "males"), where he appears to be continuing a discussion of the various punishments meted out to erst-

while males, and along with it that of 42b3-c1, where once again only males appear to be in question.

22 Literally, "unjust". The sense, however, as in the *Republic,* seems to be a very broad one, covering the whole range of virtuous action.

23 Cf. 42a2. But the reference could be to the supposedly greater moral goodness of males; the comparative adjective *kreitton* is, here as elsewhere, ambiguous as to whether it is to be understood as meaning physically stronger or morally better or both.

24 For further evidence of Plato's stance on the matter see (depressingly) *Laws* 781a–d.

25 It is however no mere repetition. The fact that the good horse and the charioteer are practically indistinguishable in terms of their (rational) desires and actions suggests that Plato is on the verge of returning to his former belief in the basic *bi*partition of soul into reason and impulse.

26 G. Müller, *Studien zu den platonischen Nomoi* (Munich 1951), p. 190.

13. Epistemological Pedigrees in the *Republic*

In this paper I shall first offer a brief outline of the pedigree of several key terms in Plato's allegories of the Sun and Cave and simile of the Line. I shall then comment in greater detail on a number of them that strike me as being of particular interest, both in terms of the role they play in Plato's schema in the *Republic* and it terms of their significance for Plato's future philosophy or the philosophy of his successors.

1

First, a brief pedigree of the key terms, which are *eikasia, pistis, doxa, dianoia, noesis*, *gnosis, mathema*, and *episteme*. To take them in turn: *eikasia*, Plato's word for the first stage of cognition, is a word that can mean both likeness (Xenophon) and conjecture (*Corp. Hipp.*). Its cognate noun *eikon* also means likeness, which allows Plato to make a significant point about the things the prisoners see on the wall of the cave and the state of consciousness they enjoy when seeing them. The further linguistic similarity of the noun *eikon* to the noun e*ikos* in the sense of likelihood will allow Plato to make an equally major point later on, in the *Timaeus*.

Pistis. Plato's word for the second degree of cognition, is a term found throughout pre-Socratic literature, and has the senses of both belief and trust. Plato will exploit both senses; the prisoners, once they have seen the wall, the puppets and the fire, are aware that, in a world now seen to possess three dimensions, decisions based on the evidence presented by a genuinely three-dimensional environment are more believable and more trustworthy than conjectures based upon the evidence presented by a merely two-dimensional one.

Doxa, Plato's overall term covering *eikasia* and *pistis*, is a word of similarly wide usage to *pistis* in pre-Socratic thought, its main senses being opining and seeming. Plato will again exploit both senses to the full in discussing the state of consciousness of those who operate below the transverse line or within the cave, where what is taken to be truly real (the wall, fire and puppets, for example) is still only an ap-

parent reality, and what passes for knowledge is only a *doxa*, even if a possibly correct *doxa*.

Dianoia is a word found first only with certainty among later pre-Socratics like Diogenes of Apollonia and Democritus. Its basic meaning is something like "intelligence". Plato, as we shall see, will do something uniquely his own with it.

Noesis, Plato's term for the type of intellectual apprehension characterizing the two upper sections of the line as a whole (which I shall call *noesis1*) and the topmost section in particular (which I shall call *noesis2*), is a word found only late on in the pre-Socratic tradition, and it plays a very significant role in the thinking of Diogenes of Apollonia in particular. Its cognate verb, by contrast, *noein*, meaning more often than not something like "come to be aware", or "come to know" (what Gilbert Ryle used to call a "Got it!" verb), is found amongst the writings of the pre-Socratics from very early on, in the poem of Xenophanes, and is pivotal to the thinking of Parmenides. The impact of both words on Plato's epistemology in the *Republic* is also, as it turns out, pivotal, though in ways seldom, I find, understood, and I shall be returning to the matter in some detail later on.

Gnosis is a word Plato uses as a synonym for *noesis1*. It, too, as it happens, is a key concept in the poem of Parmenides, and its relevance and importance to Plato's schema in turn I shall discuss as part of my analysis of the terms *noesis* and *noein*.

Mathema, meaning something like "object of learning", from the verb *manthanein*, is a word hiding in the wings, so to speak, in both Parmenides' and Plato's epistemology. And it, too, has an interesting relationship to *noesis1*, as I hope to be able to show.

Finally, *episteme*, the word for knowledge in Greek that most people are acquainted with. It is used on a couple of occasions by Plato (533c5, e8) as a synonym for *noesis2* when he returns to the question of dialectic as part of his overall discussion of the higher education of the future guardians. In earlier Greek prose it is basically a "skill" word, as in "knowledge of archery".[1] But Plato, characteristically, will put his own spin on it, as we shall see.

2

Now for some detailed discussion, beginning, unsurprisingly, with what Plato draws from the poem of Parmenides, what he rejects, and

what he transforms into something uniquely his own. In his poem Parmenides distinguishes the real as an object of *doxa* from the real as an object of *noein*, the first being the real as physically perceived in all its variegation by the senses, the second the real as ascertained (or, if you like, intellectually perceived) in its wholeness (*oulon*) or totality (*pan*). The latter optic reveals a remarkable set of characteristics (fr. 8): the real as a totality, it turns out, is one, homogeneous, eternal (or, perhaps better, timeless), changeless, finite, and ball-like in its mass. The former optic has as its object the world we see around us, ever-changing, and forever unamenable to knowledge.

The knowledge word Parmenides uses is of importance. *Noein*, as I have mentioned a little earlier, is at base a word of "coming to be aware", "coming to know", and is a natural term for Parmenides to use to describe what one discovers at the end of a journey, a *hodos*. So is the synonym he uses, *gignoskein*, another process-verb indicating a "coming to know" something.

Turning to Plato, we find that he has in large measure adopted this general epistemological stance, with *doxa* (and in particular *orthe doxa*) standing for the maximum achievable by sense perception and *noesis* (and in particular *noesis2*) for the highest attainment of intellection. In both philosophers *doxa* refers to a state of opinion based on what *seems* to be but is not exactly the case (that is, it is used in both of its two best known senses), and *noesis* and *gnosis* (Plato)/*gignoskein* (Parmenides) to a coming to be aware of or coming to know a reality at the end of a lengthy process of searching. And the *parallelism* – in both philosophers – between the two *types* of search, the one via the senses the other via the intellect, is even more exact if, as seems to me very possible, each is exploiting, if only unconsciously, the further well-known use of the verb *dokein* to mean "to come to a decision" or "to come to a resolution" after a process of discussion or investigation.[2]

As far as *noein/noesis* are concerned, Plato is clearly indebted for the first to Parmenides and for the second to Diogenes of Apollonia, for whom *noesis* is the name for his supreme principle. As for *gignoskein/gnosis*, it is no great surprise to find Plato, like Parmenides, using a noun cognate with *gignoskein* as a synonym for *noein*, and in the act of doing so nicely confirming the basic meaning of *noein* as a verb of intellectual achievement. But the noun *gnosis* itself is of even

greater interest, it seems to me, because of its own special usage in Greek *legal* prose of the day, where it means a judicial "inquiry" or "investigation". On the assumption that Plato is fully aware of this, it can be argued with some plausibility that here again, if only unconsciously, Plato could well have opted for this noun to describe the combination of stages three and four of the search for knowledge precisely because of the sense of *movement towards a goal* that is effectively built into it.

To complete the picture, each of the two philosophers clearly sees the whole process of the search for knowledge, the object of which is for each of them "that which (genuinely) is" (*to eon/ to ontos on*), as a process of *learning*. Parmenides is told on two occasions by the goddess what he has to "learn also" (1.31) or "learn next" (8.51) as part of his task. Plato for his part makes much of the fact that his future rulers are *philomatheis*, and the various objects ascertained in their four-stage search are *mathemata* of different levels, culminating for some, when all four stages have been completed, in the apprehension of the *megiston mathema* of all, the Form of the Good.

So the similarities between the two philosophers are powerful, and not to be underestimated. But the differences are great too. Parmenides has one universe, Plato apparently two. For Parmenides the one universe, viewed in a particular way, can become an object of knowledge; for Plato even God can have at best only an *orthe doxa* about the world of space-time. This seems, on the face of it, enough for us to characterize them as being irreconcilably different as philosophers, but it is far from certain that Plato himself saw things this way. Plato could well have replied that his world of Forms was in fact ontologically *different* from the world of sense perception, and so perfectly compatible with a single Parmenidean universe. As for the difference between them over whether this universe could ever become an object of knowledge, this was in fact a matter over which Plato seems to have struggled for a lifetime, and it is only in a relatively small number of the dialogues – one of them being the *Republic* – that Plato opts with clarity for the view that it cannot. On other occasions, notably in the *Meno*, he seems to argue that a "true opinion" about some feature of the world can indeed be converted into knowledge by what he calls *aitias logismos*.

As for his Forms, they have all the appearances of being each characterized by the epithets ascribed to Parmenides' "real as a totality" described in fragment 8: each is one (in the sense of "self-same", a notion he will later explore in the *Timaeus*), homogeneous, eternal (perhaps better "timeless"), changeless, and finite – in the sense of being in some very real sense distinct, and different from all *other* Forms. And one can, I think, go further than this. For Parmenides, as we saw, it is the real seen as a whole (*oulon*) or as a totality (*pan*) that is knowable, and one of the great claims to fame of Plato (preceded by Socrates) is to have seen the implications of this for the establishing of a sound epistemology. That is to say, they saw with clarity that a knowledge claim is a claim involving universality, though of the two of them it may well have been only Plato who was tempted to set up these universals as transcendental particulars.

Turning to the first degree of awareness of things, *eikasia*, we have seen already that Plato's source for its sense as "conjecture" seems to be Greek medicine, as it is in so much of the rest of his philosophizing. And in a sense it also serves as the basis for his understanding of all four stages of the search for knowledge, even though each finishes up with its own specified description. Let me explain what I mean. Building upon the term *eikon*, a noun cognate with *eikasia* and sharing its other sense, likeness or image, that we noticed in Xenophon and elsewhere, he constructs a theory of an ascent to understanding by the help of so-called "images" (*eikones*). These images are, at each stage of the ascent, in fact the presumptive *realities* encountered at the previous stage, and each stage is achieved with the help of these as some sort of crutch or walking-stick as one makes one's way up the gruelling path.

What this means is that all four stages, each in its own way, involve conjecture. The first we might call conjecture pure and simple, a state of consciousness in which one takes everything at face value, without evidence, and possibly worse, without any notion of what evidence might be, what in any instance might count as evidence, or why evidence might be necessary at all. The second stage, *pistis*, involves the use of evidence, but is still deeply embedded in the realm of assumption (*hypothesis*), such as the assumption that it is the contents of the cave, not the images on its wall, which constitute ultimate reality. The third stage, *dianoia*, is similarly deeply embedded in assump-

tion, this time the assumption that, for example, the shortest distance between two points is a straight line. And as in the case of *pistis*, where what we would call the arts serve as a valuable aid to our understanding of ourselves and the world, despite – in Platonic terms – their ontologically more emaciated state *than* the world, the presumptive realities of the previous state of understanding to *dianoia* are transformed into *eikones* which help the now *mathematically* involved mind to achieve *its* goals; Einstein needs a blackboard, like any other mathematician, and Plato himself, in the *Phaedo*, can only discuss the Form "equality" by reference to would-be equal sticks.

In what way *ta mathematika* (to use Aristotle's later terminology) might serve as *eikones* for the future philosopher struggling through the fourth stage towards *noesis* is a little unclear, but one might conjecture (to use the *mot juste*...?) that they serve to bolster the assumption that the world of Forms is in some way quantifiable, if only in the minimal sense that each Form can be thought of as numerically one. Whether Plato thought that *ta ontos onta*, i. e., the moral/aesthetic Forms finally grasped in *noesis*, themselves served as *eikones* in the final ascent to the Good he does not say, but it seems reasonable to affirm it, given that he does say that dialecticians too use *hypotheseis* in their ascent to the *anhypothetos arche*, and throughout his discussion the making of assumptions and the use of *eikones* have consistently gone hand in hand. What those assumptions are does not get specified, but it seems safe to affirm that they will include, minimally, the notion of the *goodness*, in varying degrees, of the various ontological levels of what is, an assumption that will only be confirmed and illuminated by the grasping of the Form of the Good itself.

What emerges with clarity, I think, from all this is that each stage of the ascent, except perhaps the very first, is marked by a *process* which culminates in an epistemic conclusion. In the case of stage three of the ascent, the process is something like what many have described as "discursive reasoning", in which the student of (Platonic) mathematics postulates a number of premises as "givens" without proof, and proceeds to make deductions from them as to the existence of the various mathematical Forms. In the case of stage four Plato's word for the process is *dialektike*, and it is distinguished by the fact that the assumptions that underpin it are under constant and critical examination, presumably by the well known elenctic method, to a point where,

when they have finally been destroyed (*anairousa*, 533c8) as assumptions, the future ruler is in a position to embark upon the ascent towards the Form of the Good itself. But the point to stress here is the dialectical process; at no juncture does Plato say that the scrutiny of hypotheses must *finish* before the future ruler is allowed to move on. And indeed it *could not* finish, if a necessary condition for knowledge in the strict sense is the apprehension of the Form of the Good. One hypothesis which must necessarily survive the process, as I have already mentioned, must surely be the assumption of the varying degrees of *goodness* of the various levels of the real.

As far as the first and second stages in the great ascent are concerned, the "process" which leads to the confidence and belief which is *pistis* will presumably be one of empirical observation and the formulation of theory about the contents of the cave-world (to use that Allegory for a moment) in the light of evidence available within the cave. In the case of stage one, that of *eikasia*, any process seems to be the very weak one of the ongoing naive acceptance of things at face value, without any sense of need to pursue the matter further.

In a quite different way, at the other end of the spectrum, the apprehension of the Form of the Good is apparently something involving no process in any sense at all. Instead, we are to imagine a soul that is in a state of suitable preparation for and expectation of the great event, and it comes as no surprise to find the author of the Seventh Letter talking about it as a happening of great suddenness, like the striking of a spark that catches fire. But we need not dwell on this account, which may not after all be Plato's. What Plato himself has to say is remarkable, despite his protestations about his inability to talk in detail on the matter. For the fact is that, in addition to his constant use of *opsis* throughout his account[3] he uses two further very powerful metaphors to describe the reaching of the final goal: *haphe* (touch)[4] and *mixis* (sexual intercourse). I just mention them now, but will return to them to conclude my discussion of the influence of some of the things I have been talking about on the later Plato and on subsequent philosophy.

When we look at the account as an ensemble, it is clear that Plato has, with perhaps one exception (his aberrant-looking use of the word *episteme* on a couple of occasions in a particular passage), combined with great linguistic care the ascent in terms of its processes and the

ascent in terms of its achievements at each of the various stages. So, the *processes* will be 1) "ongoing acceptance of things at face value" (*eikasia*), 2) "an ongoing confidence that – among other things – the end of the road has already been reached" (*pistis*), 3) "arguing from unsubstantiated premises to conclusions" (*dianoia*), and 4) "arguing by the method of elenchus" (*dialectike*). The attendant *achievements* at the various levels will be, 1) at the level of physical reality, a firm decision *(doxa*; one finds the same sense in the accusative absolute *doxan*) concerning – among other things – the reality of the objects in the cave as distinct from the mere images on the wall; and 2), in the realm of the intelligible, a coming to awareness (*noesis, gnosis*) of the existence of the Forms and of certain truths concerning them.

As far as the aberrant-looking use of *episteme* at 533c is concerned, one would undoubtedly have expected a reference here to *noesis2*, in line with the earlier description of the four-stage ascent as *noesis2* at 511d8-e2, where the simile of the Line is being summarized. Why Plato opted for so static a term when all his others are so pregnant with process I cannot tell, but I can offer some sort of guess. And that is, that the word is Plato's gift, as he discusses the topic for the last time in the *Republic*, to the memory of Socrates, who is after all the chief interlocutor in the dialogue, and for whom *episteme* was very much the central word for knowledge, as so many of the earlier dialogues make clear. It could also be perhaps a linguistic hint that, in just the same way as the word tended to be used by Socrates, *episteme* is to be understood as the state of "know-how" achieved by one who has attained the realm of the Forms – the *dialectical* know-how, one might say, that serves as the archetype of the day-to-day know-how involved in knowledge of the arts and crafts. If this sounds a little unfamiliar, it should not, when we remember that the *mixis* involved in union with the Form of the Good was referred to as *he hos alethos mixis* ("*genuine* intercourse"), by contrast, presumably, with *mixis* as we commonly understand the term. As such, this *episteme* is the equivalent of *noesis* in its more static sense of the state of "understanding" achieved as a result of *noein* as "coming to know" or "coming to be aware" (see, e.g., Parmenides frs. 2.2, 8.50 DK), but with the additional Socratic overtone of that *type* of understanding which is the understanding involved in knowledge *how*.

3

It is now time to turn to the place some of these concepts occupy in the history of epistemological thought after the *Republic*, both in Plato's writings and elsewhere.

In the *Republic* Plato makes much of the concepts of *eikasia* and its cognate noun *eikon*, and this serves as the basis for an even broader discussion in the *Timaeus*, when the topic is the origin and nature of the universe itself, where he calls into service two further cognates, the participial noun *eikos* ("likelihood") and the adjective *eikos* ("likely"). His account of how the world began (not *whether* it began; he says unequivocally that it *has* begun) is, he says, a likely story (*eikos mythos*) or likely account (*eikos logos*) (at one point he calls it *malista eikos,* "particularly likely" – by contrast, one must assume, with competing stories or accounts). And its likelihood (*eikos*) lies precisely in the fact that it has to do with a world that is itself something describable as a likeness (*eikon*), in this case a likeness to the Form Eternal Living Creature. As such it will be the object of *doxa*, like any other physical object (as he unwisely takes it to be; but that is another paper), and that *doxa* will invariably be *alethes* when uttered as an everlasting statement of World Soul.

It is easy to downgrade this account, as many have done, and most prominently Cornford, who translates Plato's phrase "likely" as though he had written *monon eikos* ("*only* likely"). But nothing is being downgraded by Plato; images have their part to play in Plato's scheme of things, and we have already seen the importance of their role as helpers in the various stages of the ascent to knowledge in the *Republic*. To say that the world is the potential object of true opinion not knowledge is simply to describe it as it is, and this detracts in no way from the fact that a true opinion is never anything less than valuable, describing as it does what is inexpugnably the case. All that separates it from knowledge is its untethered status, a separation Plato considers permanent when writing the *Republic* but not so, it seems, when writing the *Meno*. For Plato these things are simply basic laws of epistemology and metaphysics, binding on all rational agents, including World Soul and the Demiurge.

As far as the concept of *noesis* is concerned, we have already noticed its use by Diogenes of Apollonia to indicate his supreme principle. For his contemporary Anaxagoras this was of course *Nous*, and

the choice of the more dynamic term by Diogenes can have been no accident. Plato, as we have seen, is happy to exploit the term to describe the highest epistemic achievement of the *human* mind rather than the divine, preferring to stay with the Anaxagorean concept of *Nous* to describe his supreme principle, while dealing with the Socratic objections to it brought by the Socrates of the *Phaedo* by presenting it in the context of a fully articulated teleology.

It is left to Aristotle, in *Metaphysics* Lamda, to put together a picture that draws upon all of these insights, and a very remarkable picture it is. I mention it here because it has been very largely misunderstood, and this seems to me a great pity. Famously, in *Metaphysics* Lamda Aristotle describes the Prime Mover as *Noesis Noeseos*, a phrase almost invariably understood by translators as "a thinking of thinking", "pensamiento de pensamiento", or the like. But nothing could be further from Aristotle's intentions. The last thing he wishes to ascribe to the Prime Mover is process or potency, and thinking is nothing if not process. What Aristotle is after, following Diogenes of Apollonia and possibly also in some measure Plato's discussion in the *Republic*, is a description of an eternal moment of success in the reaching of a goal after a search. As the poet puts it, words crack and break under the strain from trying to describe these things, but one is probably close to what Aristotle is getting at if one imagines a moment in which the formulation of the goal, the attempt to achieve it, and the achievement of it are a single, eternal moment of "Got it!" And what the Prime Mover has "got", of course, is himself.

In case there is any doubt, I should add, as to whether Aristotle, like Plato, knows that *noein* is basically an achievement verb, where one comes to be aware of x or comes to recognize x after a *search* for it, one needs only to turn to the *De Anima*, where at 429b9 *noein, heurein* and *mathein* (one thinks immediately of Plato's *philomatheis* and of course the *megiston mathema*) are clearly seen as synonyms. The Prime Mover, seen under this light, is, across an eternal moment, an eternal act of self-discovery, self-awareness and self-recognition, and a new, and I think very exciting dimension is added to our understanding of the oft-mistranslated phrase *Noesis Noeseos*.

Let me end with just a word about the three metaphors used to describe the contacting of the Form of the Good, *opsis* (by implication), *haphe* and *mixis*. It is as though, faced with a skeptic and hard-nosed

empiricist demanding physical evidence for everything, Plato had searched for the three metaphors most likely to convince him that someone who had made contact with the Form of the Good had really done so. The result is brutally frank, and supremely effective, as Plato launches into the world of empirical evidence to make his point. Faced with the question whether one had really been with x the night before, one might disarmingly but devastatingly reply in terms of the *opsis, haphe* and *mixis* which took place. It is not an answer which would necessarily convince a jury simply on one person's say-so, but in practical terms the three metaphors combined, and particularly the last one, constitute what Plato knows will be a more than satisfactory response for most people. And it has retained its force, as it turns out, within the context of a quite different tradition of mysticism, as the writings of John of the Cross will attest.

To turn finally to the overall worth of the *Republic* position on the ascent to knowledge, I find myself torn between wonder at the genius of the description of it and its relative weakness vis-à-vis positions adopted in the *Meno* and *Theaetetus*. More importantly, it plants philosophy very firmly on a path of what has been called "thing ontology" (as distinct from "fact ontology") that was to last for more than two millennia. It is, it seems to me, a false and quite misleading path; but that is another story.

Notes

1 An example of this usage can be found at *Resp*. 511c5, where the knowledge in question is "skill in philosophical discourse".

2 For many examples see LSJ II 4 b, c, *s. v*. Particularly interesting is the use of the accusative absolute *doxan*, where the linguistic affinity to the noun *doxa* is striking.

3 The *omma tes psyches* is a prominent feature of this discussion.

4 The word can also be used of the kindling of light, a meaning which may well be behind the account offered in the Seventh Letter.

14. The Myth of the *Statesman* and Some Cosmological Implications

In this paper I wish to re-examine the apparent cosmological thinking that lies behind the famous myth to be found in Plato's *Statesman* (a passage in the dialogue which, as the argument of my paper will make clear, I take to have been, in general terms at least, thought through by Plato if not necessarily written out *in extenso*, very close in time to, and probably slightly later than, the *Timaeus*).[1] I say "apparent" because the myth, *prima facie*, is so bizarre in its content that many have been tempted to read it in some figurative sort of way, to save Plato from himself, so to speak. I myself will follow a quite different tack, taking it as a basic methodological principle that even a myth in Plato is to be taken seriously unless the dialogue presents us with good reason for not doing so. This principle is in turn, given the remarkable closeness between what is said in the *Statesman* and what is said in the *Timaeus*, based upon the way in which, in the latter, the words *mythos* and *logos* that characterize his description of the universe's origins and various aspects of it are used almost interchangeably (indeed, the word *logos* is used in this context over twice as often as *mythos*, though this would be hard to guess from the amount of ink commentators have spilt on the supposed significance of his [rather rare] use of the word *mythos*).[2]

Why Plato might have wanted to link the terms *logos* and *mythos* so closely in the *Timaeus* when in other dialogues he is at pains to accentuate their difference is of course a good question, and I hope I will not be accused of cowardice if I simply defer it to another occasion. For the moment, in order to clarify the parameters of my topic at hand, I shall simply stress how, in the *Timaeus*, the account (*logos*) of the world's origins is on occasion described as the story (*mythos*) of its origins.[3] But a story need not be, in our modern sense, "mythological"; its veridical status will turn on how we understand the term "story" in any given context. In English, this is well illustrated by the use of the common phrase "the creation story". For a believer, the phrase is understood as "the (true) story of the beginnings of the universe at the hands of a benevolent creator"; for a skeptic it is under-

stood as "the (false) story (read: "myth", in the modern sense) of the putative origins of the universe at the hands of a benevolent creator believed by the gullibly religious".

What is interesting here, I think, is that neither the believer nor the skeptic is in any disagreement about the propriety of Plato's use here of the word "story" (a word which for the Greeks seems to have meant at base "a narrative involving divine beings"), as well as his use of the word "account"; their disagreement is simply about whether the story (or account) is *true* or not.

With that by way of brief but important introductory comment, we can now turn to the *Statesman*. Here we have an apparent cosmology that shares a few important features of the cosmology of the *Timaeus*, and we can begin our discussion by simply listing them.

From a state of chaos or confusion or disorder (*ataxia*) the Demiurge produced a world of some sort of order.

The world formed by the Demiurge is characterized by a rational soul, which acts as rationally as the presence of the constraining force of *to somatoeides* ("the bodily", or perhaps better "the physical"), permits, and this seems to play the role played by *Ananke* in the Timaeus. He also – possibly – uses the term *Heimarmene* (Fate) for this force, though in context (272e6), as Brisson (*ad loc.*) points out, the term seems more naturally taken adjectivally, in the sense of World Soul's "allotted" *epithymia*.

As a paradigm, or set of paradigms, for his making of the world the Demiurge appears to use Forms (referred to slightly vaguely as *ta theia*).[4]

While he offers no further detail on this, I have argued elsewhere[5] that we can legitimately infer from what he says that, in both the *Timaeus* and the *Statesman*, the Forms can be understood as eternal (i.e., as perpetually existing in a non-temporal "moment"); matter and space as sempiternal (i.e., existing in a sequentiality that is without either temporal beginning or end); and the fashioned world everlasting (i.e., with a temporal beginning, but – by divine *fiat* – without a temporal end).

If Plato had stopped there, we would have been looking either at a brief "dry run" for the cosmology of the *Timaeus* (if the *Statesman* were written first in sequence) or at a very brief summary of the cosmology of the *Timaeus* (if it were written second). But a series of often

startling differences of detail – one of them a prominent absence, some of them apparently major changes – complicate the story somewhat, and these, and what I think of some of their implications, will be the burden of the rest of my paper.

To start with the prominent absence: given the importance of the concepts of Being, Sameness and Difference in the Timaean cosmology, their apparent absence in the myth of the *Statesman* has puzzled a number of scholars. But this is hardly a problem. In the *Timaeus* Plato is out to show that the world is founded on firm ontological and epistemological principles, and in such a context stress on the above-mentioned concepts makes sense. In another context, where he seems to have somewhat different plans in mind (and I shall be dealing with this anon), discussion of such principles is not relevant.

Which is not to say, of course, that we are looking here at some sort of incompatibility between the two visions of the world that are being proposed. The one, stressing how the basic goodness of the world is founded on sound ontology and epistemology, looks at the cosmos in terms of the here and now, while it is on what the *Statesman* will call one of its "backward" spins; the other, the *Statesman*, looks at the broader picture of everlasting spins *and* counter-spins to which the cosmos is subject. Far from there being any incompatibility here, there is in fact a fine congruence; the only question of significance is whether Plato had both ideas in mind when he wrote each of the dialogues, or whether the ideas propounded in the *Statesman* were not present to his mind when he wrote the *Timaeus* but were the outcome of slightly later, and I would say very fruitful, reflection.

Other scholars, I should add, have noted that there is, apparently, no *Phaedrus*-style doctrine of self-movement of soul, and specifically of World Soul, in the *Statesman*. But this too seems to me a non-problem, since, as I have argued in many places in the past and still believe, there is no such doctrine to be found in the *Timaeus* either.[6]

More important, by any reckoning, are the apparently important *changes* in the *Statesman*'s cosmology. Using what appears to be the model of an orrery fastened by a cord from its topmost and bottommost points to a room's ceiling and a pivot at floor level, he imagines a universe operating according to cyclical principles that recall the views of Empedocles. With an initial push from the Demiurge, the universe begins spinning in a "forward" direction, a direction he equates with

rationality and divine guidance. Such spinning is easily recognizable as what he had called in the *Timaeus* the movement of the Same, or, if you wish, movement along the plane of the Sidereal Equator. As for the movement of the Different, this too, while unmentioned in the *Statesman*, is easily reconcilable with what is being said, being as it is simply the counter-movement of the Ecliptic that the movement of the Sidereal Equator subsumes. At this stage of things the sun, moon and planets rise in the West and set in the East.

But the movement of World Soul, it soon becomes clear, is not rational because it is movement in a forward direction; its movement is rational because it is axial rather than rectilinear. The same World Soul, once the world has "wound" in a forward direction to the limit of its spin, is then driven, by the "inborn urge" (*symphytos epithymia*, 272e6) that has been allotted to it, or, as we might put it, under the force of its own stored momentum, to *unwind* again, and spin backwards, with the sun moon and planets now rising in the East and setting in the West, to its original state of inertia. At which point the Demiurge gives it another push, and the process begins again, everlastingly.

Each "unwinding" process, it should be added, involves a reversal of what we would call history, biological and otherwise; in Plato's description, creatures eventually grow not older but younger (270d-e), they become "diseased" and "broken apart", and also gradually smaller in size, such that they eventually "risk disappearing" altogether, while in hair-covered creatures the reversal of history manifests itself in a particularly dramatic way with the birth to them, not of normal young, but of creatures "already gray-haired" (273e). It is, in effect, the periodic "dying" of the universe, which is then restored to life (273d-e) by another push of the Demiurge in a "forward" direction.

What are we to make of all this? We need first to get clear that *each* of the world's spins, forward and backward, is in accord with the rationality of the Demiurge and that of World Soul; a counter-spinning motion is no more an indication of the presence of a supposedly irrational element in World Soul than is the movement of the Different (in the *Timaeus*) an indication of a supposedly irrational element in World Soul there either. As the *Phaedo* and *Republic* had made clear very early on, the presence of *epithymiai* in a soul is in no way an automatic indication of the presence of irrationality; its noetic

part or aspect has its appropriate *epithymiai* too. In the case of World Soul in the *Statesman*, it needs help to do what the rationality with which the Demiurge has endowed it bids it do, that is, to move axially, whether on its forward or on its backward spin. This is due of course to the presence of *to somatoeides*, whether the Demiurge holds control of the world (271d, 270a) or whether he has let go of the steering wheel and allowed it to do what it must, and that is, "under its own power" (270a) to begin, and keep up for the appropriate time, a process of reverse-rotation.

The point that is also clearly being made here is that the forward movement of World Soul is both rational and totally contingent on the Demiurge; "everlasting self-turning" is explicitly denied it, and credited uniquely to the Demiurge (269e5–6). The help given by the Demiurge is also to be understood as more than just an initial push. He also "guides it on its way and helps it to move in a circle" (269c5); the recalcitrance of *to somatoeides*, one might speculate, would perhaps otherwise hinder the universe from reaching the maximum limit of its forward spin before (prematurely) beginning the reverse journey.

In trying to understand all this I would myself contend that, in the *Timaeus*, Plato is describing a universe that has many features of the world on its backward spin described in the *Statesman*. But he has also come to realize, in the period between the writing of the two dialogues, that no satisfactory cosmology can really be written unless one takes critical account of what we have learned to call the Second Law of Thermodynamics. The phrase may be anchronistic; but the concept most certainly is not. As early on as the *Republic* Plato was making much of the fact that the tops children play with will cease spinning as soon as the children cease to whip them. In a word, the top illustrates a scientific truth that moving systems tend to run down. And all he has to do now, as so many of his pre-Socratic forebears seem to have done also, is to extrapolate from everyday experience, such as, for example, the forces apparent in any whirlpool at a bend in the river, or in the motion of wine nonchalantly whirled round in a goblet during a banquet, and ask the question, What if this basic truth of day-to-day experience turns out to be applicable to the cosmos as a totality? Or as we might put it, if centripetal and centrifugal force are so obviously at work in the motion of whirlpools and wine whirled in wine-goblets, might they not be at work in the realm of the stars and planets too?

This type of question, it seems to me, Plato clearly did ask himself, and with astonishing results. Satisfied that the universe was a physical object (*Tim.* 28 – a terrible, if understandable, mistake, of course, that merits a lengthy discussion in itself), and a physical object circular in shape, and adhering to a three-dimensional vision of things agreed upon by everyone till early in the twentieth century, he comes up with the most brilliant vision of the cosmos available before Einstein. If the universe is an object spinning on some sort of axis, as it appears to be, it will, being physical, ultimately run down, like all physical objects. But if offers no signs of running down. So the model of a spinning top will not do in this instance; it must be refined in some way to accommodate the Demiurge's plans for the world. This is achieved by the model of an orrery moored to a pivot on the floor and tied to the ceiling by a cord. There is a point at which it can be said that the cord has been tightened to its greatest extent, and this point will only be reached with active aid from the Demiurge. It will also be the point of the maximal time allotted to the universe for its forward spin; at that moment the Demiurge releases his control of things, and the reverse motion of the universe begins.

Bizarre as these things may have sounded till relatively recently, they have in fact become relatively commonplace thinking for contemporary cosmology. There is very large agreement among cosmologists that the world is, as Plato had argued, finite; that it had a beginning in time (which is in fact the first point *of* time); that it is in a state of "outward" motion (in some sense of the word outward that needs to be accommodated, of course, to four-dimensionality); that there is some possibility that, having reached its outermost possible limit for expansion, it will begin a tumultuous journey back to the primal atomic state from which it began; that another Big Bang could restart the process of expansion; and that this process could go on everlastingly. I make no claims, of course, for the truth of these postulations (the Big Bang theory could still, I think, collapse); I merely make them to indicate how large numbers of contemporary physicists, including some of the world's most famous, are now espousing theories remarkably congruent with what Plato says in the so-called "myth" of the *Statesman*, and finding them in no way bizarre or eccentric.

Aided by the enormously liberating influence of the concept of quadri-dimensionality, modern science can now of course imagine (or,

at any rate talk about) a universe that is finite but unbounded, something not conceived of (or indeed, without the concept of quadridimensionality, even conceivable) by the Greeks. With this as a tool they can postulate an oscillating universe conceived of in terms of expansion and contraction. Denied this tool, but armed with the still powerful and valuable Second Law of Thermodynamics, Plato can, within the constraints which bind him, come up with a theory which, I would argue, is as plausible for its time as the Big Bang theory seems to be to so many physicists today.

Granting to Plato, *argumenti causa*, that the universe is, not just finite, but a physical object just like any other physical object composing it (a much more difficult pill to swallow, of course), and that any putative oscillation to which it might be subject will need to take place within the confines of its three-dimensional circularity, the Platonic world will oscillate in the only way left to it, that is, in temporal sequentiality and within the framework of its axial rotation. Which of course is exactly what the *Statesman* account says it does.

But surely, it might be argued, his case, even for a fourth century BCE audience, is weakened by his appeal to Demiurgic intervention? Was he not attacked immediately on this point by Aristotle? And what possible sense can be made of talk about the reversal of biological history and the like? Even if we concede that his cosmology looks interestingly defensible in a number of respects, is not this sort of thing the stuff of myth (in the modern sense of the word myth)? Well, it remains the case that a number of major astrophysicists of the last century (including Einstein) have not found the Big Bang theory or some variant of it incompatible with theism; *why* the primary atom or atomic cluster was in such an unstable state as to explode continues to puzzle many for whom "It just was" will always be an unsatisfactory answer.

As it happens, in the *Statesman* Plato also offers a description of the Demiurge that is not to be found in the *Timaeus*. The Demiurge, he says, is in a "sempiternal state of self turning" (*auto eauto strephein aei*), and this remarkable view is something the pantheist Einstein – had he ever read it; there is no evidence he ever did – would have immediately recognized (he called it *Natura*, following the lead of Spinoza). As Aristotle saw, this view suggests that for Plato the Demiurge is a quantum (*megethos*) co-extensive with the universe, and he naturally proceeded to criticize it. But it is, as theistic theories of crea-

tion go, a good deal better than Aristotle's own account of the activity of the Prime Mover in *Physics 8*, where Aristotle asks us to believe that a wholly immaterial substance can be "located" at a point on the outside edge of a physical cosmos. If, by contrast, the Demiurge can be declared to be a quantum, such that he can be supposed to turn himself co-extensively with the turning universe, the problem of his supposedly causal role and activity may not have been solved to the satisfaction of skeptics, any more than the supposed role and activity of the Prime Mover of *Physics 8* will ever satisfy, but it has assuredly been mitigated.

As for Plato's talk about the reversal of biological history, it is worth pointing out that even Stephen Hawking believed for a while that, if the Oscillation theory of the universe is soundly based (as he thinks it is), then during the period of the Great Return (or, as he calls it, Big Crunch), after any period of Expansion has been completed, we can expect a complete reversal of history, in which broken cups will be re-constituted, and the like. I quote him not because what he is saying seems plausible; it does not, and he abandoned this notion, I'm happy to say, soon after he formulated it. But it is a natural avenue of speculation to explore, once one is into cosmologies of this order. In Plato's case, there is probably more excuse for saying so, in that his world is three-dimensional and his view of time strictly rectilinear. With a theory of four dimensions, Hawking made the mistake of thinking that a time which, on a cosmic scale, might well prove to be as "curved" as space itself, would evince the same characteristics in the case of all sequences, biological and historical as well as cosmological. Or to put it in more overtly philosophical terms, if the universe as a whole is subject to regression, it does not follow that everything composing it is subject to regression; the time-honoured fallacy one commits in thinking so is of course the Fallacy of Division. Or to put it in different terms again, retrogression in the sense of a return of scattered particles to an original more compressed condition in no way resembles the supposed reversal of events that have taken place in historical sequence.

* * *

Up to this point I have been trying to show that the broad outlines of the so-called "myth" of the *Statesman* constitute what could well have been the world's most sophisticated cosmological theory antecedent to Einstein; in reducing Aristotelian and Ptolemaic theory to shreds in the 16th and 17th centuries, and apparently believing that we had seen the end of classical Greek contributions to cosmology, Renaissance cosmologists clearly missed the import of one of the little-read dialogues of Plato, the *Statesman*.

This is not to say, however, that the account in the *Statesman* is fully coherent, not least because Plato has an agenda somewhat more complicated than simply propounding a new cosmological system. As a Greek he felt an obligation to incorporate into his picture a number of views about a Golden Age of Chronus and a race of "earth-born" humans of which authors like Hesiod had spoken, and at this point the detail of his account almost necessarily becomes fuzzier. But the overall picture seems to be something as follows.

During the period of the world's forward spin, which immediately antedated the appearance in the world of the current race of humans (a feature of its backward spin), there existed a race of "earth-born" humans, knowledge of whose existence persisted in our race-memory across the interval of the great changeover when the Demiurge let go of his control, and the world set out on its "backward" rotation, the one on which we are at this moment.

How the earth-born became such is accounted for in terms of the death of humans towards the end of the antecedent period of cosmic backward spin, in which the old actually grew younger, became babies again, and then, in Plato's words, "proceeded to waste away until they disappeared altogether" (270e8–9). The earth into which they were absorbed is then seen by Plato to be the source, throughout the final short time before that period of the world's backward spin ended, of the "earth-born" humans that would flourish during the "golden age" of Chronus.

On the face of it this is very strange; in a period of universal retrogression of biological species, humans are apparently able to beat the system! Plato is fully aware that this is the sort of thing that brings belief in "earth-born" humans into disrepute (271b3), and he comes up with an argument that takes us right back to the Argument from Opposites (or, perhaps more precisely, the Principle of the Oscillation

between Opposites) in the *Phaedo*. It is, however, unfortunately as unconvincing in the new context as it was then. The principle of Oscillation between Opposites, he says, is not in fact being flouted in the case of humans: it actually *exemplifies* it! To use his own words: "If old men went back to being children, it follows that people should in turn (*au*) be put together again (*palin*) from the dead, there in the earth, and come back to life; they would be following the reversal of things, with coming-into-being turning around with it to the opposite direction …." (271b4–8). (Rowe translation, with changes)

This argument is worth a close look. And we can begin with its counterpart in the *Phaedo*. In that context Socrates makes his point by wittingly or unwittingly trading on an ambiguity in the use of the prepositional prefix *ana*, which can of course mean either "back"/ "again" or "up", depending on the verb of which it happens to be the prefix. Examples of the former would be *anametrein* (re-measure), *anapiptein* (fall back) and of the latter *anistasthai* (stand up) and *anegeiresthai* (wake up). Not adverting to this ambiguity, Socrates draws a parallel between the verbs *anegeiresthai* (wake *up*) and *anabioskesthai* (come *back* to life), to the total destruction of the argument he is attempting to construct. While it is easily demonstrable that a given person, x, who has just woken up is the same person as someone who fell asleep three hours ago, it is not in the least evident that one and the same person, y, who died last week has just "come *back* to life". The processes of falling asleep (*katadarthanein*) and dying (*apothneiskein*) and waking *up* (*anegeiresthai*) and coming *back* to life (*anabioskesthai*) share only a linguistic parallelism; to assume that they are parallel as *processes* too, such that they can be used to describe what happens to *one and the same person*, is to assume the point to be proved and to make nonsense of the argument.

Returning to the *Statesman*, we can see at once that Plato is falling into an old trap. To talk of *the same people* who went from old age to childhood to disappearance and absorption into the earth as then being "put together again" (*palin synistamenous*) and "coming back to life" (*anabioskesthai*) on the strength of a supposed parallelism (cf. the force of *au*) between the processes of going-out-of-existence and coming-into-existence is once again to assume the point to be proved. And also to assume it, apparently, without at least the show of argument that he had put up in the *Phaedo*.

But I don't wish to leave the myth of the *Statesman* on this somewhat discouraging note. The problem I have just been mentioning, and the trouble it gets Plato into, can reasonably be, and I would say should be, distinguished from his extraordinary successes in the matter of cosmology. Getting back to the question of *logos* and *mythos*, it is perhaps ironical that it is when he attempts to integrate into his cosmology an episode that really *is* mythological (in our modern sense) that he finishes up being his most unconvincing. But this loss is not to be compared with the gains.

There are, of course, many other features of the *Statesman* myth that could be discussed, and perhaps they can wait for another occasion. Let me merely signal here that I think there will continue to be discussion of the way Plato attempts to fit other features of the Greek belief-system into his overall schema, though this time he offers no philosophical argument to back his case; his views are simply stated, and no attempt is made to found them on logico/cosmological principles of polarity, as was the unfortunate case with his discussion of rebirth of humans as (fully adult) "earth-borns". As we have noticed in passing, the "golden age" of Cronus characterized the period of the world's "forward" spin, when the Demiurge and his cohort gods were in control, and it was clearly a period which has many features of a divinely run Utopia (271e-272a). But, true to his principles, Plato is unprepared to call the age more *eudaimon* than the current one without knowing first whether the people of that age were virtuous; and such knowledge he claims he does not have. During this period, humans were all earth-born.

The age of Zeus, the current age, is one where the Demiurge has abandoned control and World Soul is left to control *to somatoeides* in things as best it can. And it is the age, till very near its end, of the birth and death of humans in the manner with which we are acquainted.

But this raises a major cosmological point, as follows. Was Plato suggesting, in the *Statesman*, that there was an infinite series of worlds, such that there never was a beginning of them in time? Or did he believe that there may have been a long series of worlds, but that "in the beginning" there was an initial Demiurgic push? Those who tend to read the *Timaeus* figuratively may be tempted to go for the former scenario, if only to keep Plato consistent. But I would myself doubt the value of this as a reason for drawing any such conclusion,

believing as I do that only the *details* of the world's formation are in doubt in the *Timaeus*; *that* it has come into being *(gegone*), like all other physical objects (28), seems to me clear.

A more likely scenario, it seems to me, is that he thought, in the *Statesman* as well as in the *Timaeus*, that the world began as an act of Demiurgic formation, and this would at bottom account for the fact that it was only later on, when the first backward spin began, that, according to his argument, sexual reproduction started. And why exactly he might have argued this way becomes clear from a glance at the famous "belly-button controversy" engendered by the appearance of Gosse's *Omphalos* in 1857.[7] In this extraordinary book Philip Gosse asked the question whether Adam, in another text that appears to state unequivocally that the world was fashioned by a Maker, had a navel or not. If he did not, then there was reason for thinking that the first human was not in fact fully human; humans have navels. But if he did have a navel, he bore on his body the marks of a biological history he had never experienced, and in this sense his Maker was deceiving us.

As a devout Christian, but also a biologist who did not believe in evolution, Gosse was between a rock and a hard place; either solution to the question he had posed himself has its problems. He himself finished up opting for the view that Adam *had* a navel, arguing further that, if this is a reasonable thing to believe, there is no reason to doubt that, in similar fashion, God might also have filled the earth with fossils that represent a history of the *cosmos* that never took place. As for any question "Why?" that might be posed, we must console ourselves with the answer that the ways God wishes to test our faith are many, and this is just one of them.

Plato, it seems to me, faces a similar problem, but more plausibly opts for the very opposite conclusion to that drawn by Gosse. If at the beginning, he seems to be saying, the Demiurge fashioned the cosmos or a set of cosmoi, and also fashioned humans at that same beginning, then there is no reason to think those humans would be equipped with sexual organs, since such organs would suggest a biological history that they had never in fact had. Sexual differentiation, and with it the sexual generation of the race, would come *later on* in the process – a point made with clarity in both dialogues.

What strikes me about all this is the soundness of Plato's instincts, even when he is not necessarily forming a strict argument for his case. Just as he sensed that, if the description of the universe he puts together in the *Timaeus* at best describes that universe as seen from our present perspective, a description of it seen from a broader perspective will necessarily have to take account of entropy in a way the *Timaeus* had not, so here he senses, I would say brilliantly, that the rationality of his Demiurge would be called severely into question if he was credited with imprinting onto the first humans an apparent biological history that had never taken place.

The conclusion I tentatively draw from all this is that Plato is a cosmologist of significance, both in the *Timaeus* and the *Statesman*, but especially the *Statesman*. That significance lies in what I can only call his extraordinary "philosophical imaginativeness", even when the arguments he puts forward prove faulty. I am thinking of his satisfaction, in the *Statesman*, that what we would call the Second Law of Thermodynamics must be taken into consideration, even if he makes the mistake of assuming that historical sequence is reversible in the way physical sequence might be. Or his view that the world might have had a beginning in time that constituted the first moment *of* time. Or his notion that the universe might be finite, even if, understandably, he made that finitude a bounded one.

Just how remarkable this is can be seen at once if one compares it with the cosmology of Aristotle, a cosmology so rigid and implacable in its details that it collapsed the second Galileo saw the moons of Jupiter through his telescope. Plato's cosmology, by contrast, for all its erroneousness in detail and occasional weakness in argument (a notable example being his understandable but disastrous error in thinking of the universe as an object of the same ontological order as its own constituents), has the virtue of such fluidity in the matter of detail (which is why he chooses the flexible medium of *mythos* in which to describe it) that the broad picture survives handily in the context of contemporary speculation.

To contemporary physics it is more than acceptable that the universe might have had a beginning in time which was the first point *of* time; that it is finite in extent, not infinite; and that it may, by entropy, be subject to a series, possibly an infinite series, of expansions and contractions. It is simply an accident of history that contemporary

physics, operating now with four dimensions and the possibility of the expansion of space in a universe that is finite but unbounded, would wish to opt for an expansion-contraction model to describe the world; and a matter of history that Plato, not conceiving of four-dimensionality, would opt for the model of an orrery spinning and counter-spinning on a cord, to accommodate the fact, as he saw it, that if the universe is a physical object it will have an outside edge; that this outside edge will be curved, as of course it appears to be to the naked eye; and that the totality of space is subsumed within the world. But for its day it was a magnificent piece of cosmological imaginativeness and insight.

In a word, Plato has for too long been credited with greatness for his ethical system, and aspects of his ontology and logic. It is time we also recognized his claims to fame as a cosmologist.

Notes

1 The history of the myth's interpretation broadly follows that of the history of the interpretation of the *Timaeus*. Plato's talk of the world's apparent formation in time by a Demiurge was first characterized as purely figurative, apparently, by Xenocrates (see Aristotle, *De Caelo* 279b32–280a10), and the same view may also have been held by Speusippus and left open as a possibility by Theophrastus; for estimates of the evidence see A. E. Taylor, *A Commentary on Plato's Timaeus* (Oxford, 1928), *ad loc*. Notable among modern proponents of the view have been Harold Cherniss (in "The Relationship of the *Timaeus* to Plato's Later Dialogues", *AJP* 78 [1957]) and Leonardo Tarán, "The Creation Myth in Plato's *Timaeus*", in *Essays in Ancient Greek Philosophy*, eds. John P. Anton and George L. Kustas (SUNY Press, 1971) (he adds Crantor to the ancient list and possibly Heraclides Ponticus). Aristotle, by contrast, along with several other ancient commentators, took Plato *au pied de la lettre* on the matter, and they have been followed in modern times most notably by Gregory Vlastos.

It will also be noted, from the opening sentence of the present article, that I no longer hold, as I did in 1995, when I wrote "Forms, Demiurge and World Soul in the *Politicus*" (*Revue de Philosophie Ancienne* 13.1 [1995] p. 15; reprinted in *Cosmos as Art Object* [Binghamton University: Global Academic Publishing, 2004], p. 91), that

the entire *Statesman* was likely written very soon after the *Timaeus*, and that both of them antedate the *Phaedrus*. The natural sequence for the publication of the three *completed* dialogues now seems to me to be *Timaeus*, *Phaedrus*, *Statesman*, with the *Statesman* appearing some years after the *Phaedrus* but including within its compass a Myth that had, in general terms at least, been already thought through by Plato, if not necessarily set down in words, at a time not much later than the writing of the *Timaeus*. (I am grateful to Kirk Sanders for useful comments that brought my attention to this matter and satisfied me that a change of stance was called for).

2 The phrase *eikos mythos* is used only three times in the *Timaeus*, the phrase *eikos logos* seven. For details see Luc Brisson (*Platon: Timée/Critias* [Paris: Flammarion, 1992]) p. 230, n. 113.

3 T. M. Robinson, "The *Timaeus* on Types of Duration", *Illinois Classical Studies* 11 (1987), pp. 143–151, reprinted in T. M. Robinson, *Cosmos as Art Object* (Binghamton University: Global Academic Publishing, 2004), pp. 23–31.

4 For an articulate statement and defence of this view see Richard D. Mohr, *The Platonic Cosmology* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1985) pp. 141 ff.

5 See, e. g., *Plato's Psychology* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, second edition, 1995), pp. 95 ff.

6 Stephen Hawking, *A Brief History of Time* (New York: Bantam Books, 1988), Chapter 9.

7 Philip Gosse, *Omphalos* (London, 1857).

15. Aristotle and Cognition[1]

In this paper I plan to outline what I take to be Aristotle's views on a very controversial topic, that of the so-called "active" or "productive"[2] intellect, and then to offer a more general estimate of the philosophical worth of his overall theory of cognition.

The Productive Intellect

As is well known, for Aristotle cognition has close affinities with physical perception. The eye, for example, in potency for seeing (eye1) becomes a seeing eye (eye2) when activated, the necessary condition being the presence of light. The intellect, in parallel fashion, in potency for cognition (intellect1), becomes a knowing intellect (intellect2) when activated, the necessary condition being the presence of what he calls the "active" or "productive" intellect (intellect3). In a loose sense, eye2 can be said to "see", but it is more precisely the individual that sees, using as a (sense) organ the eye. In a similarly loose fashion, intellect2 can be said to "know", but it is more precisely the individual that knows, using as a (psychic) organ the intellect, an intellect which he on one occasion, near the end of his argument, calls the "passive" intellect (430a24).

There is one further parallelism. The intentional object of physical perception is the specific form of the physical particular, the *aistheton*, and in the act of perception, in which, e. g., eye1 becomes eye2, the sense organ "becomes" such a form without its matter. The intentional object of cognition is the generic, non-emmattered form, the *noeton*, and in the act of cognition, in which intellect1 becomes intellect2, the intellect "becomes" such a form. And it is able to become *all* such *noeta* (430a15).

This intellect (or possibly both this and intellect3 – the so-called active or productive intellect – combined) is at one point referred to by Aristotle as *choristos* ("separable", "distinct", 429b5), but in what looks like a clarification later in the account[3] he seems to argue that it is only intellect3 that is in fact separable and does actually separate from the individual (430a17, a22). He also seems to hold that the various acts of cognition which characterize intellect2 are intermittent[4]

and held together only by memory. The act of cognition of intellect3, by contrast, is of its nature a single, uninterrupted activity (430a18), that of "making" or "producing" the *noeta* that intellect2 "becomes",[5] and memory is not part of that activity (430a23–24).

If this summary of Aristotle's views is correct, it appears *prima facie* to be an attempt on his part to deal with a number of problems stemming from a reading of various passages in Plato, found notably in the *Phaedo*, the *Republic*, the *Timaeus* and the *Philebus*. The *Phaedo*, characterised by a trenchant distinction between soul and body, reason and impulse, had been echoed by Aristotle himself in early life in his *Eudemus* and *Protrepticus*. But with the passage of time he developed a new and on the face of it wholly unplatonic psychology, in which soul and body were argued to be related to each other not as two distinct substances but as the form and matter of a single substance. This left him with a problem which had continued to puzzle Plato to the end, and that was the problem of the nature and operations of intellect vis-à-vis soul, and whether these were such as to constitute a reason for believing that it at least if not the whole of soul was in fact immortal. In *Republic 10* the argument is somewhat unclear, but for a number of scholars it has opened up the possibility that of the three "parts" of soul only intellect is likely to be immortal.[6] In the *Timaeus* that possibility (if it really is such) has developed into what seems like a firm conviction on the matter. But if the various eschatological myths are to be taken seriously, Plato was in his moments of religious fervour inclined to believe that what passed from one life to another was significantly more than just intellect, and this strain in his thinking seems to have finally prevailed by the time he came to write the *Laws*, when, following up on an idea he first broached in the *Phaedrus*, he argued that soul as such, not simply intellect, is immortal.[7]

Aristotle, after his early years in the Academy, apparently came to the belief that there was little to be said for psycho-physical dualism, and with such scepticism must have come a concomitant puzzlement over how, if at all, we could be meaningfully said to possess immortality. As he searched for a solution to the problem a doctrine of eternal, transcendent unensouled nous in the *Philebus* (30d) may well have attracted his interest, as undoubtedly did the form if not the content of the argument for the immortality of (rational) soul propounded in the

Phaedrus. For we find him using a similar argument to prove the existence of an eternal, transcendent, unensouled Prime Mover in *Metaphysics Lamda* which is simply *noesis noeseos* (1071b3 ff., and 1074b34). Such a notion, coupled with the further notion of indispensable condition – drawn from the *Phaedo* (98b ff.) – could well have supplied him with the tools he needed for his own solution to the problem of what if anything in us survives physical death.

Given his matter-form doctrine of the body-soul relationship, he could not while preserving any philosophical consistency entertain the possibility that human soul, being of its nature the form of a transient physical body, or any part of such soul could be immortal. The logical conclusion of this was that human intellect, if understood as part of human soul, could never be immortal either. Yet something in him was drawn to continue affirming, as he had affirmed so strongly in his early works, that some aspect of us is indeed immortal. But in so affirming he was faced with a major dilemma. If that aspect of us turned out to enjoy memory, it would on further inspection be seen to be in fact part of our physical and hence mortal selves, memory being of its nature tied to temporal sequence and *eo ipso* to the physical. If it turned out to be wholly immaterial by nature and so *not* bound by memory, it could well turn out to be arguably an immortal intellect but never the personal intellect recognized by an individual as his/her own.

The doctrine of an active or productive intellect that I have dubbed intellect3 is the result of his remarkable conclusion to accept the second horn of this dilemma. And it leaves readers with many questions about the nature of such an intellect, and about the reasons why Aristotle might have opted to argue for its existence.

That it needs to be an intellect at all is the first puzzle. If the analogy between sensation and cognition is as precise as it at first appears, what is needed for the transition from intellect1 to intellect2 is the presence of an indispensable condition analogous to light, not a third intellect. That Aristotle is fully aware of this seems clear from the fact that he does actually compare intellect3 to light (430a15). As such it appears to operate in a way not unsimilar to Plato's Form of the Good, where the Good both illuminates the Form world known to intellect, such that its contents become clear to intellect, and also produces or makes those contents (*Resp*. 509d4 ff.). Notoriously, how-

ever, Aristotle rejects the Theory of (transcendental) Forms, and with it the notion of the Form of the Good. But while this may be the case, he also seems to have accepted the metaphysical need for a cosmic principle analogous to such a Form but without its unacceptable characteristics, and this was of course for him a Prime Mover that is both a Form and an Intellect.

Such a principle, it seems to me, he could well have found in the transcendental Intellect of the *Philebus* mentioned above. Combining from this dialogue and the *Republic* the notions of such an eternal Intellect as both efficient cause and indispensable condition (i. e., the condition that it operate as "light"), he was in a position to posit a role for an analogous coeternal intellect operating behind *human* cognition. What problems he saw attaching to such a notion we do not know, and given the apparent ease with which he posits large numbers of "prime" movers and cosmic intelligences in *Metaphysics Lamda*, perhaps he saw no problems at all. For his readers, however, the question has never ceased to cause problems.

Alexander, stressing the notion that intellect3 is "of its nature *energeia*" (430a18), is satisfied that it is in fact God himself,[8] and thus in no real sense part of us at all. But this cannot be correct, if the participle *choristheis* is to be credited with the only meaning that seems appropriate in context, and that is "after it is separated" or "once it is separated"; separation in any sense would appear to involve potency, and this alone seems to guarantee God's exclusion from the list of possibilities.

What of the intellects that move the planetary spheres? The possibility that they are intended is again a low one, since their number is small by contrast with the number of human souls. But the notion of celestial intellects may nonetheless turn out to be the key to the solution of the problem, if one bears in mind a dialogue that Aristotle read in detail, the *Timaeus*, and from which – for all his criticisms – he drew rather more ideas than he was prepared to admit. There, it will be remembered, an intellect directly fashioned by the Demiurge is assigned to each star in the universe. From there, after a period during which they are "sown" into the various planets, including earth, they are brought to birth as humans, and upon completion of a life of moral goodness return to the same star (*Tim.* 41b–e).

The details of this are obscure, but it is fully in accord with much else in Plato of an Orphic cast and so probably not to be dismissed too easily. In any case we can assume that Aristotle, as part of his reading of the whole dialogue, also read this passage, and I hypothesize that, as so often, he unconsciously took from it at least as much as he consciously rejected. For these disembodied intellects turn out to have been created in enormous numbers – numbers sufficient in fact to account for the manner of cognition of each and every human, past, present and future if it transpires that each such intellect plays the role of intellect3 in those humans. They are also, it turns out, remarkably like intellect3 in their activity. For their natural state, it would seem, is to be disembodied, and to live a life of unending cognition, a life unnaturally interrupted for a while by incarnation (*Tim*. 41b-42d). The natural state of any intellect3, likewise, is one of unending activity – the activity of cognition – and it too, it seems, has that state unnaturally interrupted for a period by incarnation (430a17–25).

Where Aristotle's own contribution to all this emerges is in the notion that intellect cannot be part of the self, on the presumptive grounds that the body-soul complex to which it is in any given instance attached is obliterated at death, and with it the thread of memory which gave that complex throughout life its individual personhood. So intellect as Plato had understood it (in Aristotle's scheme what he called the "passive" intellect) was not in fact immortal; indeed no part or aspect of what Plato understood as the human soul was immortal. If the concept of immortality has been preserved, it is at a price that Plato at any rate would, if his myths are to be taken seriously, almost certainly not have been prepared to pay.

If this understanding of the pedigree of intellect3 is correct, Aristotle stands in a tradition stretching back to Hesiod and no doubt beyond. In the writings of Hesiod[9] we meet for the first time in Greek thought the concept of the hero who after death is made into a demigod (*daimon*) and appointed a "guardian of mortal men". The sceptical Heraclitus demythologizes the whole notion, and asserts that our *daimon* is in fact our character (*ethos*, fr. 119 DK). How far Plato wished to demythologize is less clear, but the intellects other than the planetary gods which are the Demiurge's direct creation in the *Timaeus* look remarkably similar to Hesiod's *daimones* in terms of their intermediary status between the human soul and God, and the influ-

ence of Heraclitus' remarks might well account for the fact that for Plato there is also a clear relationship between the *ethos* of a given intellect and the particular star from which it comes and to which it returns, since the star in question is described as *synethes* to it (*Tim.* 42b5).

As far as Aristotle is concerned, he too seems to be anxious to demythologize rather than totally reject a famous notion. The result is the abandonment of the notion of specific stars to which his intellects3 severally return, along with a stress on their intrinsically impersonal nature. What is retained, however, if my understanding of intellect3 is correct, is something still very close to Hesiod's original notion of a guardian-*daimon*. For intellect3 provides the condition for the operation of the rational principle of each and every individual, and to that degree serves as the guardian of that which is most precious and specific to them, whether they are aware of such an intellect's presence or not, or avail themselves of its help or not. It is, in different terms, always "at the door" for each and every individual, ready to flow in as a stream of light from outside of that door (*thyrathen*)[10] any time the door is opened.

The Theory of Cognition

Such, in brief compass, is what seems to me the most plausible interpretation of Aristotle's theory of intellect and cognition. In it we see an Aristotle who has apparently come a very long way from his earlier thinking, when the evidence we have suggests that he was a committed dualist and an ardent adherent of the doctrine of personal immortality:

Eudem. fr. 5 (Ross) (= Procl. *in Remp.* 2. 349. 13–26 [Kroll]):

> "The divine Aristotle [also] states the reason why the soul on coming hither from yonder forgets the sights it saw there, but on going from here remembers yonder its experiences here. We must accept the argument; for he himself says that on their journey from health to disease some people forget even the letters they have learned, but that no one ever has this experience when passing from disease to health; and that life without the body, being natural to souls, is like health, and life in the body, as being unnatural, is like disease. For there they live according to nature, but here contrary to nature; so that it naturally results that souls that pass from yonder forget the things there, while souls that pass yonder from this world continue to remember the things in it".

Protrept. fr. 10b (Ross) = Aug. *C. Iul. Pel*. 4. 15. 78 (quoting Cicero's *Hortensius*):

> "...it's true what Aristotle says, that we are punished much as those were who, once upon a time, when they had fallen into the hands of Etruscan robbers, were killed with studied cruelty; their bodies, the living with the dead, were bound as exactly as possible one against the other: so our minds, bound together with our bodies, are like the living joined with the dead".

For many students of the philosophy of mind Aristotle's later view, in which soul relates to body as form to matter, is clearly progress over his earlier psycho-physical dualism. Whatever the truth of this, some residual Platonism – and in particular a commitment to a doctrine of immortality of some sort – never seems to have left him, and we have seen how his attempts to accommodate such a doctrine led him to posit the existence of intellect3. Since such an intellect exists in its essential nature as *energeia* (430a18) and is only its true self when separated from the individual (430a22–23), it is a natural conclusion that it is a substantial form, not simply the form of some particular x. For Alexander the only substantial form in Aristotle's scheme of things is God, and he accordingly equates intellect3 with God.

As we saw above, however, this can hardly be reconciled with the doctrine that intellect3 at some time "separates" from the individual. As such a separable entity it appears to be indeed thought of as some sort of substantial form, and as such it brings Aristotle back much closer than he perhaps wished to be to his earlier psycho-physical dualism, despite his doctrine of matter and form. For the substantial form that is intellect3 is clearly immaterial, and its supposed relationship to the human body which it at one time inhabits just as puzzling as the soul-body relationship posited by any psycho-physical dualist, be the latter Plato, Descartes or Malebranche. The beauty of the form-matter doctrine was the freedom it appeared to offer us to talk aspectually rather than substantially of thought-processes, emotion, sensation, and all that goes with life. Once intellect3 is posited, these gains seem to be lost at a stroke, and we are back to the old problem of attempting to relate an immaterial substance to a material one. And here Aristotle fares no better than did Plato, though his weapons of battle are no doubt more sophisticated.

With his doctrine of form and matter to guide him Aristotle can argue that intellect3 operates not as immaterial substance on material substance but as form on form, the product of its activity being the reduction of that form which is intellect1 to that further form which is intellect2. He can further argue that its "productive" role as *nous poietikos* is more that of indispensable condition than of efficient cause in the more usual sense of the word; what it in the most precise terms "produces" (in the sense, perhaps, of "makes available" [see above, n. 5]) are the *noeta* that intellect2 "becomes". But in the final analysis this analogy will not save him, even were such an analogy to prove a meaningful one. For the problem of relating the immaterial substantial form that is intellect3 to the physical composite that is the individual is just as great as, if not greater than[11] that of relating the substantial form that is the Prime Mover to the physical composite that is the universe. The interposition of no number of "intermediaries" of either purely formal or formal-substantial status will ever bridge a gap that seems unbridgeable within the ontological and psychological frame of reference that has been constructed. A form that is strictly only the form of itself, be that form the Prime Mover or intellect3, can never in any satisfactory way be thought of as relating to or influencing any form or substance other than itself.

Which brings us to the biggest problem of all. So far I have been suggesting that the monistic cast to Aristotle's matter-form analysis of substance masks, in certain areas, such as the relationship of the Prime Mover to the world and intellect3 to the individual, a dualism that is as stark as anything argued by Plato in the *Phaedo* or penned by himself in earlier days in the *Eudemus* or the *Protrepticus*. But this, it seems to me, while being a very severe problem, is a problem within the context of an even greater one, and that is the commitment by Aristotle (and so many other Greek philosophers) to a "thing" ontology at all, whether the "things" in the system turn out to be best describable in dualistic or monistic terms or other terms again.

Let me explain myself. Not the least of the many brilliant features of the matter-form doctrine is that it brought Aristotle to the verge of the distinction of the meaningful and the referential: the concepts of *soma* as matter and *psyche* as form are meaningful, but unlike the concept of *anthropos*, refer not to entities but rather to logically distinguishable aspects of entities. At this point two moves were open to

him, the one in the direction of what will be later called nominalism – a doctrine already espoused it seems in some inchoate way by a number of the sophists – the other in the direction of some version of essentialism. He opts for the latter course, distinguishing himself radically from Plato in the process by setting his essences firmly *in re*. It then remains for him to examine how such essences are contacted to serve as the basis of perception and knowledge, and in so doing he concludes that the contact in question is one of coalescence between the form of the particular and the sense-organ in the case of sensation and one of coalescence between generic form and "passive" intellect in the case of knowledge.

In this Aristotle is again perhaps more Platonic than he wished to be, the only difference between them being Aristotle's affirmation that the coalescence involved is so total as to deserve the description "becoming". On this view factual or propositional knowledge is something parasitic (*kata symbebekos*) upon such elemental contact/coalescence: to get to know (*noein*) that p, for example, is to reach an irrefragable state of certainty that in some matter of empirical fact an individual (or some individuals) and an essence (or some essences) are or are not in a particular relationship to another essence or essences, and in some matters not amenable to empirical investigation, such as pure mathematics, that an essence or essences are or are not in a particular relationship to another essence or essences. Error in judgement is, *pari passu*, and equally *kata symbebekos*, an act of misidentification or misclassification.

This is not the place to argue the respective merits of essentialism and "fact" ontology. But one can pick out, it seems to me, two particular reasons why Greek philosophers seem to have opted almost instinctively for essentialism.[12] The first has to do with the verb *noein* itself and the various nouns and adjectives cognate with it. As von Fritz pointed out in impressive detail,[13] the verb first appears in early Greek literature as a verb of direct perception, in which an object is "located". The commonest way to locate by sense is with the organ of vision, so much so that in perceptual terms the verb soon comes to be more or less synonymous with seeing, or more precisely, with coming to see. Parallel to this is a cognitive use of the verb in the sense of "coming to know" or "coming to be aware", accompanied by a

broader use that is occasionally found which may be roughly translated "think" or "have a notion".

Apart from the occasional use in the latter sense, usually clear enough from the context, the verb operates for the most part as one of cognitive achievement, in which one finally "sees" something that has been sought after. This, I have argued elsewhere, is the dominant if not exclusive sense of the verb in the poem of Parmenides,[14] and Plato after him, using precisely the same verb, sees the attainment of knowledge as the "seeing" of specified objects – the Forms – by the "eye of the soul" (*Resp*. 507b9–10, 518c4–6, 519b3). The same, despite the frequent and wholly inappropriate translation "thinking" by many translators, is equally true of Aristotle in his writings on philosophical psychology; it is not "thinking that p" which is analogous to perception, but rather "getting to know that p" or "coming to appreciate that p" which is analogous.

If this understanding of the pedigree and usage of *noein* and its cognates is correct, then the contact/coalescence paradigm of cognition found in Plato and Aristotle is a very natural corollary of such usage: to "come to know that p" is at base to "locate" or "see" certain entities, and in so locating or seeing, to contact and coalesce with – indeed for Aristotle to "become" – such entities, and it is the job of philosophy to investigate the nature of such entities.

The second argument involves the structure of the Greek language itself. An interesting feature of classical Greek is the fact that is still appears to contain residues of an earlier stage of its development in which parataxis, rather than syntax, was dominant, with particularly important implications for how Greek philosophers tended to understand the process of cognition. A language which can and frequently does express itself in propositions of the form "I know this (*tauta*), that 2 + 2 = 4" is likely to lead philosophers who speak such a language, unless they are very wary, into thinking that the "this" in question is a place-holder for an entity of some sort, and the subsequent noun-clause as the unpacking of that entity in terms of a proposition. A language like our own, by contrast, where parataxis has largely faded from consciousness if it was ever there at all, is unlikely to sense any such "object" of cognition, since none is expressed in our own version of the proposition in question or seems in any way necessary for the complete and accurate understanding of that proposition.

The above two reasons, it seems to me, are enough to explain why Greek philosophy tended to follow essentialist lines, and Aristotle's philosophical psychology is no exception. Had he or earlier Greek philosophers gravitated towards a fact ontology instead it would, under the circumstances, have been greatly surprising even if perhaps more philosophically defensible (here I lay bare my own prejudices), and it would certainly have transformed the system into something hardly recognizable as Greek philosophy at all. As it is, the more predictable thing happened, and he along with other Greeks tended to accept language usage as a relatively sure guide rather than as guide or siren, depending on circumstance. The siren who suggests that the apparent "object" of cognition words is in fact a real object that is "seen" or "located" by the knowing mind we have already noticed; the siren who suggests that all general terms refer is another. If in our own time we are more aware of the existence of such sirens, we are so on the strength of appreciating, and learning from, some of the magnificent if vain strugglings into which even the greatest of the Greeks could on occasion be unwittingly enticed by them.

Notes

1 This paper originated, many years ago, as a comment on a paper read by Fr. J. J. Owens to the annual SSIPPS meeting in New York City in 1977. In it I take up once again the challenge to attempt to make sense of Aristotle's theory of cognition as addressed in *De Anima 3*, and specifically his theory of the so-called "active" or "productive" intellect – a theory dubbed by Fr. Owens a "hornet's nest of problems". Although I cannot claim to have solved any of the problems in question, since I am not sure they are soluble within the framework Aristotle has set up, I do hope to have shed some light on the exact species of hornet inhabiting the nest.

2 The adjective is *poietikos*, and despite the time-honoured translation "active" one that seems more plausibly translated "productive"; see A. C. Lloyd, *Form and Universal in Aristotle* (Liverpool 1981) 56, followed by J. M. Rist, *The Mind of Aristotle* (Toronto 1989) 179.

3 The position of the words *kai houtos* in the sentence suggests strongly that Aristotle is seeking to clear up a possible confusion. He was right to try; what he had written is indeed confusing, and the confusion has fuelled comment ever since.

4 Reading *all'ouch hote men hote d'ou voei*, 430a22, with the mss.

5 Aristotle does not describe in detail how he conceives of this process, and indeed in the context talks of intellect3 as producing "all things" (*panta*, 430a15) rather than all *noeta*. But in the overall context it is clear that he is talking about intelligible forms. As far as the verb *poiein* is concerned, it seems to mean "produce" or "make" in the sense of "make available". Just as physical light "makes available" for physical seeing the individual or perceptible *eidos* of a physical object, so the "light" that is intellect3 makes available for cognition the generic or intelligible *eidos* to be found in the same particular. Bathed in this light, intellect2 "sees" intelligible or generic form – the *noeton* – in the perceptible or individual form that is the *aistheton*.

6 The passage is *Resp*. 609c ff. It is, however, as I have argued elsewhere, a doubtful passage on which to base much, since the argument is unclear enough to be interpreted as having as its referent the entire soul, not just *nous*. See T. M. Robinson, *Plato's Psychology* (Toronto 1970) 50–54.

7 The relevant passages are *Tim*. 41cd, *Phdr*. 245c and *Lgg*. 896a ff.

8 The view continues to find favour. Notable adherents to it in recent years are G. E. M. Anscombe, *Three Philosophers* (Oxford 1961) 58 (though without great conviction); W. K. C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy* Vol. 6 (Cambridge 1981) 322 ff.; C. H. Kahn, "On the Intended Interpretation of Aristotle's Metaphysics", in *Aristoteles: Werk und Wirkung* 1, ed. J. Wiesner (Berlin/New York 1985) 329, n. 26; Victor Kal, *On Intuition and Discursive Reasoning in Aristotle* (Leiden 1988) 164, n. 15; and J. M. Rist, *The Mind of Aristotle* (Toronto 1989) 182.

9 *Works and Days* 121 ff., 252 ff.

10 *GA* 2.736b28.

11 If intellect3 is, as Alexander suggested, God himself, the problem of relating an immaterial God to a material world still remains, but at least the *energeia* that is its nature need not be further qualified; it is, purely and simply, uncontingent *energeia*. If, as has been suggested above, intellect3 is in its many instances a *nous* created by and hence contingent upon the existence of the Prime Mover, the *energeia* credited to it will also need to be qualified as likewise contingent. So relating such an intellect to the particular will be not simply a problem

in itself but one complicated by its being parasitic upon a further problem, that of relating such an intellect to the Prime Mover.

12 The term "essentialism" is used here in its broadest sense, without argument as to the detailed nature of the breadth and scope of such essentialism. For a noteworthy attempt to distinguish Aristotelian from Quinean essentialism see N. P. White, "The Origins of Aristotle's Essentialism", *Review of Metaphysics* 26 (1972) 57–65.

13 Kurt von Fritz, "*Nous*, *Noein*, and their Derivatives in Pre-Socratic Philosophy", *Classical Philology* 40 (1945) 223–242 and 41 (1946) 12–34. For further useful work on the topic since then see J. H. Lesher, "Perceiving and knowing in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*", *Phronesis* 26 (1981) 2–24, and "Heraclitus' epistemological vocabulary", *Hermes* 111 (1983) 155–170.

14 T. M. Robinson, "Parmenides on Ascertainment of the Real", *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 4.4 (1975) 623–633.

16. Aristotle and the Pre-Socratics

Given the amount that has been written on the question of Aristotle's attitude towards his various pre-Socratic forbears, it would seem *prima facie* temerarious even to think, let alone to set out to show, that anything significantly new can be said on the matter, particularly in the compass of a relatively short study. If there is anything most of us think we know, it is that Aristotle tended to view his predecessors through the lens of his own philosophical preoccupations, with some frequently very skewed results. And it is tempting to simply go over this familiar ground, using perhaps the seminal work of Cherniss[1] as a point of departure and assessing the strengths and weaknesses of his various criticisms, along with attempts of various critics of Cherniss[2] to rehabilitate the master in one way or another.

It is, however, a temptation I plan to resist. Instead, I shall simply state very quickly a couple of major instances where I think Aristotle allows his interests to get in the way of what seems to be a more plausible interpretation, and then pass on to a story of more positive achievements that seems to me remarkable. So let me simply say at once that his preoccupation with *archai* can and does lead him to severe misunderstandings, such as his supposed discovery of two of them in Parmenides, "hot" and "cold" (a reference, presumably, to Parmenides B9.1 DK), a misunderstanding he then compounds by ranking them with being and non-being respectively (*Metaph*. 987a1–2). And the same could be said of his too easy assertion that Heraclitus flouts the principle of non-contradiction (see, e.g., *Phys*. 185b19 ff; though for a more cautious statement see *Metaph*. 1005b23). The list could be greatly added to, particularly if we follow the lead of Cherniss, but I shall simply leave behind for the moment such well-covered terrain.

Instead, I shall concentrate my attention on Aristotle and the one pre-Socratic who by common consent is the giant on the scene before the appearance of Socrates, and that is Parmenides. Here, it seems to me, some remarkable things of a positive nature can be said, in terms of our understanding of Parmenides, the post-Parmenidean philosophers, Plato, Aristotle himself, and in some measure western philosophy since Aristotle, and I shall spend the rest of my paper trying to show this in detail.

Let me begin with a verb, *noein*, and its various cognate nouns *noos, noema* and *noesis*. We first run into the word, in pre-Socratic philosophy, in fragment 24 of Xenophanes, where his one god "*oulos noei*", a phrase usually translated "thinks as a whole" or "thinks as a totality", or some such. It is a verb of, in von Fritz's words,[3] "realizing the situation", or at any rate a large part of the time that it is found in the Homeric poems. On some occasions it can be used in broader senses, and sometimes can even possibly be best translated as "think", but in the majority of instances, as von Fritz, Guthrie, Heitsch[4] and others have pointed out, it is a word indicating "coming to recognize", "coming to be aware of", "coming to realize", "coming to detect" something. Which is to say, it is being used in a large number if not indeed the majority of instances as a verb of cognitive achievement, closely analogous to the verb *gignoskein*.

What I myself have inferred from this is that, as an operating principle of interpretation, one should carefully investigate this possibility every time we meet the term in pre-Socratic philosophy, and adopt it as the plausible interpretation if and when the proximate and overall context so suggests. The results, when one looks at the poem of Parmenides, are startling. We learn that, duly instructed by the goddess, Parmenides can "come to recognize" (*noesai*) two routes of inquiry that are available to him, the "is and necessarily is" route, the other (which turns out to be a pseudo-route, we soon learn) the "is not and necessarily is not" route. The subject of "is" here, which at this early stage can only have as its subject "whatever this poem turns out to be talking about", is in fact usefully offered to us by contraposition in lines 2.7–8; it is "that which is" (*to eon*), however we eventually unpack the sense or senses of "is".

The same sentence equally usefully tells us that "what is" is that which one can "come to know" (*gignoskein*) or "point to in words" (*phrazein*, that is, verbalize in ostensive definition). In what seems to be an immediately subsequent sentence of explanation (fr. 3), this time involving the synonym *noein*, we learn that "to be" and "to come to know" are "the same". The sentence has tied commentators in knots for much too long. We have no need to follow Vlastos in seeing Parmenides as some sort of proto-Berkeley, proclaiming that *esse* is *percipi*, or any of the other commentators who try desperately to make sense of a supposed claim that being and thinking are in some way

conceptually locked.[5] The much more reputable and straightforward thing being claimed is that coming to know that p and p are "the same" in that soft, commonsense usage of the word "same" found frequently in the writings of Parmenides' contemporary Heraclitus, that is, *conceptually tied* in some interesting and important way, like, in Kirk's words, "succeeding or being succeeded by, each other and nothing else", or being "connected through being different stages in a single invariable process".[6]

The same misunderstanding of the import of *noein* has led commentators into all sorts of misunderstandings of the opening lines of fragment 6, the natural sense of which is surely as follows:

> "What is there for ascertaining (*noein*) and for picking out in words (*legein*) (cf. earlier *phrazein*, "pointing to in words") *is*; for it is *available* for being, whereas *nothing* is *not* available".

That is to say, of two apparently possible candidates for the title "real" only one turns out to be a genuine candidate, and that is the candidate which is the object of a process of coming-to-know and/or an act of ostensive definition. This on the assumption, naturally, given the time at which Parmenides is writing, of a thing ontology not a fact ontology, and a vision theory of knowledge not a states of affairs theory. Or, to put it differently, "If I come to know x (in the sense of 'come to intellectually "see" x'), then x"; or in more recognizably contemporary terms, "If I come to know that p, then p".

This clarified, we can turn to the astonishing fragment 8, which has been interpreted by some as Parmenides' attempt to describe the real world, by contrast with a world we think to be real but is in fact illusory.[7] But it is the interpretation which has a better claim to be dubbed illusory. While the subject of the poem is indeed "that which is" or "the real", the critical limiting factor in the description is that it is the real seen as a whole (*oulon*, 8.4, 8.38) or as a totality (*pan*, 8.5, 8.11, 8.22, 8.24, etc.). Once this optic is established, it becomes clear that, like the rest of his predecessors and contemporaries, Parmenides is interested in the universe. What distinguishes him from them in a very interesting way is his satisfaction that, in contradistinction perhaps to Xenophanes (B34 DK), he is an epistemological optimist in one crucial respect. Knowledge of the universe is possible, he is suggesting, but from a very precise optic – that is, when seen in its totality as a universe, not in terms of its component parts, structures, and op-

erations, and also simply in terms of its reality as such, not its reality as qualified in various ways. Simply *qua* real and as a totality it is the following things: *qua* real and as a totality eternal, though everything composing it is in time; *qua* real and as a totality undifferentiated, though differentiated in all other respects; *qua* real and as a totality unchanging and unchangeable, though changeable in all other respects; *qua* real and as a totality unmoving and immovable, though everything composing it is subject to movement; *qua* real and as a totality ungenerated, though everything composing it is subject to genesis; *qua* real and as a totality imperishable, though everything composing it is subject to destruction; *qua* real and as a totality complete, in the sense that there is nothing that could be conceivably added to it that is not already part of it; and finally, *qua* real and as a totality finite, and "ball-like" it its mass or dimensionality (*onkos*), i. e., shaped like what a commonsense viewing of the heavens would suggest, a sphere.

The same universe, viewed this time from the optic of opinion (*doxa*), and by that very token in terms of its hugely variant and variable component parts, structures and operations, is precisely the world of everyday observation. On the details of this philosophers will have their own particular views, and these will have varying degrees of plausibility, while being of their nature never more than *doxa*. The version outlined to Parmenides by the goddess, of which only a few tantalizing fragments exist as what is now called the Way of Seeming, is, in the very *kosmos* (ordering? structure?) of the language the goddess must use to articulate it, deceptive (*apatelon*, 8.52, 8.60). But what emerges is nonetheless, she says, something *plausible* (*eoikota*, 8.60) as such a *diakosmos* (arrangement) of language, and sufficient to overcome the attempts of any competing *doxai* to better it (8.61). Though its basic weakness, shared with other *doxai*, will still be its pluralist stance; in it *two* forms for reality have been named (night and day), whereas *knowledge* will have as its object *one* form, whose name to cover the totality (*pan*) is *to eon* ("the real", or "that which is") (8.53–4, along with "Cornford's fragment"; see Gallop 91).

With this by way of background we can finally turn to Aristotle. At *Physics* 1.2 we have a discussion of Parmenides, in which he is taken to task for failure to appreciate some critical ambiguities in the verb "to be". In so criticizing, Aristotle is in the company of a long

line of commentators, but what is seldom adverted to is the fact that he sees Parmenides to be talking about the cosmos, and moreover the cosmos we know (185b6); there is no hint that he sees him to be saying that the cosmos we know is illusory, and/or that Parmenides is committed to any form of monism, numerical or otherwise. And in this he has surely got Parmenides right; his attacks, whatever their strengths or weaknesses, are not directed at a straw man.

If what I am saying here has an air of paradoxicality, in that commentators since the beginning have tended to see Parmenides as nothing if not a monist, this is because of a misunderstanding, I would argue, of the basic epistemological stance of the poem, starting with a misunderstanding of the import and importance of the verb *noein*. And it is a misunderstanding, I will further argue, that Aristotle very effectively avoids. But I must of course justify my own heterodoxy of interpretation here, and will attempt to do so without further ado.

In a remarkable and much-read (and, more importantly, misread) passage of the *De Anima*, Aristotle talks of perceiving (*to aisthanesthai*) as being analogous to "coming to know" (*to noein*), and on the strength of this distinction builds his case for a description of rational soul as being receptive of an "object of knowledge" (a *noeton*) in the way that the faculty of sense is receptive of an "object of sensation" (an *aistheton*) (3.4.2–3). On the face of it, given the large-scale use of the verb *noein* as a verb of cognitive achievement, as we have just been seeing, this is an effective and potentially very fruitful analogy to draw, and in so doing Aristotle has a predecessor, it seems, in Democritus, who according to John Philoponus took the further step of actually *equating* the two (A 105 DK).

If I have called this famous passage "much misread", however, it is because English-language translators, from Hicks to the most recent,[8] invariably take Aristotle's analogy to be between "thinking" and perceiving, rather than between "coming to know" and perceiving, with results that Aristotle himself would surely have rejected out of hand. On the face of it there is no analogy whatever between the discursive *process* that is thinking and the specific *act* of coming-to-awareness that is perception, and a translation which suggests that there *is* hopelessly obscures Aristotle's intention. So, intellect is "nothing at all actually before it comes to know/comes to be aware", not "nothing at all actually before it thinks" (429a24). Or again, intellect

is "at this stage…capable of coming to know/coming to be aware of itself", not "at this stage…capable of thinking itself" (429b9). Or "Assuming that the intellect is something simple and impassive…how will it come to know/come to be aware <of something>, if coming to know/coming to be aware of <something> is to undergo/be subjected to (*paschein*) something?", not "How will it think, if to think is to be acted upon?" (429b23–25). Or "Mind is in a manner potentially those things that are knowable, but none of them in actuality until it comes to know them", not "Mind is in a manner potentially all objects of thought, but is actually none of them until it thinks" (429b30–31).

One could go on with examples like this, but enough have been cited to make the point. The translators are missing a crucial and beautifully clear analogy because they have failed to see that Aristotle is building his case upon the time-honored use of the verb *noein* as a verb of cognitive achievement, a case which Greek readers, fully aware of this usage, would have understood at once for the very forceful, and *prima facie* very plausible thing that it is. Let me reinforce the point with a brief look at the *Metaphysics*, before returning to the pre-Socratics.

In so doing I should like to begin with a question. Aristotle, like any other philosopher, is allowed to make mistakes, so why could he not be making the mistake of indeed claiming that *thinking* and perceiving are analogous activities, so proving all our English-language translators right after all? But this will not work. As it turns out, Aristotle has some excellent fail-safe techniques to protect his Greek-language readers at any rate from any possible misunderstanding of his intentions. Already, in the *De Anima* (429b9) he had made it clear that synonymous verbs for *noein* were "to discover" (*heurein*) and "to learn" (*mathein*), both verbs of cognitive achievement, not of simple thinking. And here in the *Metaphysics* he strengthens the point by referring to the act of *noein* as one of "coming into contact with (*thinganon*), i. e. coming to be aware of (*noon*)" its appropriate object (1072b21).

If this is right, important clarity has been achieved on how right Aristotle is in his understanding of a major crux in the thinking of Parmenides, and just what he was able to himself build as a philosopher upon that understanding. On the Parmenidean base that "coming to be aware that p entails p" he is able to construct his own case that

the Pure Act which is the Prime Mover is an eternal moment of coming to awareness of its appropriate object which is itself. Using the synonyms Aristotle has himself supplied us with, this Act must be described as something along the lines of "eternal self-discovery", "eternal self-ascertainment" or the like, where we try, impossibly, to imagine such discovery or ascertainment as without antecedent process or consequent state, and also as occurring at that eternal *moment* which is eternity rather than across some eternal *period of duration* which for most people passes as eternity.

Just how hard it is to think this way becomes clear when we see Aristotle affirming that this eternal Act is also "life" (*zoe)* (1072b26), where the very word suggests continuity. In this context he is prepared to talk of the eternity of the Prime Mover as an act of continuous (*syneches*) eternity (1072b29), but it seems to me it would be a mistake to allow this single use of the word, in which the term "continuity" might understandably be taken to suggest sequential duration, to override what he has elsewhere established with a good deal of philosophical rigor as his genuine intention in the matter.[9] In an earlier passage (407a7), for example, he talks of *noesis* as being *syneches* ("continuous") in a way analogous to the continuity and oneness one ascribes to intellect (*nous*). That is, one must imagine, in its single momentariness as an act, and in its therefore being indivisible – even, as we would say, logically – into further separable moments of before and after.

So far I have mentioned how Aristotle has done two things: he has got Parmenides right on a key point, possibly *the* key point, in his epistemology, and he has been able to build something extraordinary of his own on the basis of it. But a third achievement, of which Aristotle could not possibly have been aware, must be pointed out too, and that is the light all this throws on some hitherto obscure passages of pre-Socratic (and, for that matter, Platonic) writings. Now, finally, we can see some clear reason why Diogenes of Apollonia chose to call his supreme principle *noesis*, by contrast with the choice of his contemporary Anaxagoras to call it *nous*. In a choice of term which is no accident (that's not an Aristotelian pun), he stresses the eternal *activity* that is divine intellection (B3 DK), just as it is no accident (again, no pun) that he goes on, in a phrase replete with consequences, to state for the first time in the history of philosophy a doctrine of teleology

(things are "disposed in the best possible way"), and to clearly link the two (*ibid.*).

If, like the Socrates of the *Phaedo*,[10] Aristotle had problems finding the teleology he sought for in the activities of the *nous* of Anaxagoras, he must undoubtedly have found it in the *noesis* (and with it, the teleological stance) of Diogenes. As for his description of the Prime Mover as *noesis noeseos* ("ascertainment of ascertainment", *Metaph.* 1074b34–35), it seems clear that he is consciously opting for the contribution of Diogenes to our understanding here, rather than that of Anaxagoras.

Turning to an earlier thinker, Xenophanes, we can now with much greater clarity see what he was after in claiming that his one supreme divinity "sees as a totality, *noei* as totality, and hears as a totality" (B24 DK). English-language translators have invariably translated *noei* here as "thinks",[11] as we saw them doing when they meet the same verb in Parmenides. But enough has now been said, thanks not least to the guidance provided by Aristotle, to suggest that this is not what Xenophanes would have had in mind at all. The supreme god, he is much more likely to be saying, "comes to know" as a totality, or "comes to be aware" as a totality. If there is any residual doubt that he means this, it is surely put to rest by the use of the other two verbs in the quotation, "see" and "hear", both of them verbs of perception and both of them in that regard, as Aristotle stressed, precisely analogous to a fundamental verb of cognitive achievement, *noein*.

What all this means, I think, is that, in getting Parmenides right on a fundamental epistemological point, Aristotle has allowed us to see what has long remained hidden, and that is an extraordinary dynamism in what one might call the cosmo-theology and epistemology of Xenophanes, Parmenides and Diogenes of Apollonia, a dynamism that Plato in turn builds upon in the *Republic*, where *noesis*, the fourth stage of cognition in the Line, represents the final stage of the mind's intellectual progress, in which the mind/soul comes to know/comes to be aware of the Forms, and where Plato in his turn employs three striking metaphors to describe it as the act of apprehension that it is: *opsis* ("catching sight of", 507b9 ff), *haphe* ("catching hold of", 490b3), and, dramatically, *mixis* ("copulating with", 490b5).[12] It is Plato's failsafe technique, analogous to the use of *heurein* and *mathein* that we

saw in Aristotle, to ensure that his readers know exactly what he has in mind by his use of the dynamic verb *noein*.

It also allows us to start achieving clarity on just what Parmenides' immediate successors in cosmology, Empedocles, Anaxagoras, and Democritus, were supposed to be reacting to. Accepted wisdom (challenged most recently by Curd, though on grounds very different from the ones I am myself proposing[13]) has it that Parmenides held to an unconscionable cosmological monism, a "radical critique of commonsense belief in the world about us", which needed to be responded to by particular devices, such as the affirmation of pluralism or the affirmation of empty space or the affirmation of eternal motion.[14] But the trouble with this theory is that it is almost impossible to find evidence in their writings that they had found anything unconscionable about Parmenides at all. On the contrary, they show every evidence of accepting from him with gratitude a couple of principles which, once articulated, were perceived to be self-evident ("Why didn't *we* think of that?") and incorporated them without comment into their own and most subsequent philosophical theory. I am thinking, of course, of the principles that a) if there is something, there has always been something, and b) if there is something, there will always be something. Apart from that, they simply take issue with him as a cosmologist, accepting this point, rejecting that, and building up their own cosmological systems.

On the reading of Parmenides that I have argued to be that of Aristotle, none of this is surprising. If Aristotle is on the right track, as I think he is, especially in the area of Parmenides' epistemology, they would have seen the content of the two ways of Parmenides as being one and the same universe viewed from two different optics, and moreover exactly the same universe that they were themselves trying to describe. They would, I think, have been totally mystified by the later tradition which credited him with two universes, one of them illusory. So, as a bonus, getting a clear understanding of just how insightful Aristotle's understanding is, especially, as I have indicated, of Parmenides' all-important and much-misinterpreted epistemology, turns out to be valuable as a guide to the understanding of something which is itself *prima facie* very strange, and that is, the relative calmness with which his supposedly hair-raising doctrines appear, from what evidence we have, to have been greeted.

It might be suggested, at this stage, that there is evidence that two of Parmenides' possible pupils, Zeno and Melissus, show little sign of understanding Parmenides in the way that has just been described, and in fact appear to argue that the world of sense is indeed illusory. But this too seems to me to be doubtful. To take the case of Melissus first, he too, with Parmenides, clearly understands the real as "all of it", using Parmenides' own term *pan* (B2, DK), and agrees with him that this *pan* is eternal (*ibid.*). Where he disagrees is on its supposed limitedness, arguing instead that it is without a boundary (B3) in space as well as in time. In a further fragment (B9) we learn that, again in disagreement with Parmenides, he infers from the oneness of *to eon pan* that it has no "body" (*soma*) or "bulk" (*pachos*). This is certainly a puzzling statement by any reckoning, but one considerably less so if we understand him to mean by the phrase "not having bulk" that it is not a physical object. This would also, as it happens, be a natural conclusion to draw from its unlimitedness in space, and as such it serves as a very useful counterweight to the tendency of most Greek cosmologists other than the atomists to put a curved boundary to space, and hence to assume that it is a physical object on an ontological par with its own component parts (for a significant example see the argument of Timaeus at *Tim.* 28b–c).

If this is true, Melissus is in effect agreeing that, if we are talking about *to eon pan*, Parmenides is right on all but one point, its supposed possession of bulk. And in this, Melissus appears to be saying, Parmenides works against himself, since, if the real as a totality has a boundary, as Parmenides asserts, it is as such a physical object and hence by that very token in possession of parts.

The same can be said of the famous fragment 8, once we realize that in talking about "the one <reality>" Melissus is following Parmenides in talking about "the real in its totality". "If <the real in its totality> were a plurality", he says, each of these plural things would have to be like what he says "the *one* <real as a totality>" is. As for his further attack on the senses in this fragment, he appears to reiterate in his own terminology what Parmenides had been saying about the world of sense, i. e., that it is a world of opinion (*doxa*) not truth (*aletheia*). It is simply the one real *qua* real and in its totality that is for him "genuinely real" (*eon alethinon*) and "unchanging"; the objects of the world of sense perception, by contrast, "seem to us" (*dokei hemin*)

to be subject to change, and hence can never be genuinely real in the way the one, unchanging <real as a totality> is.

What this appears to mean is that Melissus, like Parmenides, is attacking, not plurality as such, but the claim that a world of plurality will offer us anything more than *doxa*. It is in no way a claim that such a world is illusory, but rather a claim, foreshadowing Platonism, that, on a scale of reality, it is less genuinely real than that same world seen simply in terms of its reality and as a totality. As for his final claim that, if the real were a plurality, "things would have to be of just the same nature as the one" (i. e., as the one reality as a totality), this seems to be fully in line with Parmenides fr. 8: if viewed simply in terms of their reality, a putative multiplicity of such realities would, by the law of the identity of indiscernibles, constitute that *single* reality the existence of which it was Parmenides' aim to demonstrate.

Similar things can be said of Zeno's claims too, from what little survives of them. On the assumption that what is under discussion is Parmenides' "reality as a totality" (see Plato, *Parmenides* 127–128, where Zeno is clearly credited with this view of Parmenides' *to eon*, and also what he himself claims to be supporting), we find Zeno arguing (B1 DK) that, if it were multiple, any particular within it would both have a size and not have a size, and that the total number of such particulars would be both finite and infinite (B3). The points being made are logical ones, and serve to corroborate, to Zeno's satisfaction, a case that I have previously mentioned in terms of the identity of indiscernibles: if what is under discussion is reality as a totality, any putative "parts" or components thereof will be seen to be just that, putative, thanks to the contradictory characteristics they would necessarily be endowed with.

The same might be said of the so-called arguments against motion, for the details of which we must rely on Aristotle; but the picture here is less clear. Whether we see space and time as infinitely divisible or composed of indivisible minima, either way, argues Zeno, paradoxical consequences will be produced. Whether this meant, however, that he believed (or thought Parmenides believed) that the world of sense perception is illusory is very doubtful. As a skilled debater, probably against Pythagoreans, he is interested in scoring points, not in describing the world. And Parmenides' claim that the real as such and as a totality is immobile will of course be shown to be true *a fortiori* if even

the world of apparently moving sense-objects can, by a suitable display of logical gymnastics, be demonstrated to be characterized, paradoxically, by immobility. Or so one might, I hope reasonably, speculate; the exact nature and objectives of Zeno's paradoxes are still a matter of scholarly dispute, and they will continue to constitute somewhat hazardous evidence, one way or the other, in any attempt to put together the *Rezeptionsgeschichte* of Parmenides' poem.

Let me conclude with what seems to me a fourth major achievement of Aristotle, and that is his ability, using Parmenides as his base, to set in place procedures for further constructive philosophizing, even, paradoxically, when he himself may not fully have understood an argument at issue. I shall offer just two examples, the details of which deserve a study in themselves, but the main point they exemplify seems to me instructive.

The first has to do with that old chestnut the verb "to be". On this, like so many who have followed him, Aristotle has problems making sense of the detail of Parmenides' claims, but his great contribution to ongoing philosophy, and to the search for a solution to the puzzle, is his recognition of just how ambiguous the verb is (see, e.g., *Phys.* 185a20 ff). The point here is the recognition of the ambiguity, not the clarification by reference to substance and accident which Aristotle himself takes to be the most philosophically instructive way to elucidate the problem, and it is further work *investigating* such ambiguity in recent decades, led by some splendid investigation by Kahn,[15] that has probably thrown more light on Parmenides than was thrown in the previous two millennia.

The second has to do with the concept of sameness, a concept that undoubtedly puzzled Aristotle, as it puzzles us, as we struggle to make sense of some of the more paradoxical-looking claims of both Heraclitus and Parmenides. Again, it is Aristotle's *recognition* of ambiguity in the use of the word "same" rather than his own particular *analysis* of the ambiguity in terms of substance and accident that is of lasting value, a recognition thanks to which, as I have tried to show, we can now make sufficient sense of the peculiar use of the word "same" by both Heraclitus and Parmenides to absolve both of them from any suspicion of either breaking the law of non-contradiction (Heraclitus) or prefiguring Berkeleyan idealism (Parmenides).[16] So in this regard too Aristotle turns out to be illuminating as a critic of his predecessors

in ways he might not perhaps have imagined. And the philosophical enterprise has, thanks to him, as a result moved perceptibly further forward.

Notes

1 H. Cherniss, *Aristotle's Criticism of Presocratic Philosophy* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1935).

2 See, e. g., M. C. *Stokes One and Many in Greek Philosophy* (Washington, DC: Center for Hellenic Studies, 1971), 24–26.

3 K. von Fritz , "*Noos* and *Noein* in the Homeric Poems", *Classical Philology* 38 (1943) 86.

4 K. von Fritz (above, n. 3); W. K. C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy* 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962); C. H. Kahn, "The Thesis of Parmenides", *Review of Metaphysics* 22 (1969); A. P. D. Mourelatos, *The Route of Parmenides* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1970); E. Heitsch, *Xenophanes*, *Die Fragmente* (Munich: Artemis Verlag, 1983). For a thoughtful discussion of the matter see J. H. Lesher, *Xenophanes of Colophon* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992) 103 n. 2.

5 See G. Vlastos, review of J. Zafiropoulo, *L'Ecole Eléate* (Paris 1950), *Gnomon* 25 (1953) 168.

6 G. S. Kirk /J. E. Raven /M. Schofield, *The Presocratic Philosophers*, 2nd edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983) 189

7 Mourelatos (above, n. 4) 359 ff.

8 E. g., R. D. Hicks (trans. and comm.), *Aristotle: De Anima* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1907), J. A. Smith (in Richard McKeon, *The Basic Works of Aristotle* [New York: Random House, 1941]), and H. G Apostle/Lloyd P. Gerson, *Aristotle: Selected Works* (Grinnell, Iowa: The Peripatetic Press, 3rd ed. 1991).

9 A reference to the supposed "continuity" of *noesis* at 1074b29 can be discounted, since it refers to the non-state of affairs that *nous* (= the Prime Mover) is supposedly potency rather than actuality. Since it is in fact actuality, its *noesis* is the same, an act that involves no process and is as a result not subject to the type of continuity that could ever be described as "wearisome" (*epiponon*).

10 *Phaedo* 97b ff.

11 See, e. g., Kirk/Raven/Schofield (above, n. 6), Lesher (above, n. 4).

12 That the reference of *mixis* is to sexual intercourse, not to some generalized "intermingling", seems clear from the whole account of the soul's drive towards knowledge in terms of the pains and travail of *eros*.

13 Patricia Curd, *The Legacy of Parmenides* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998) 4–5.

14 See, e. g., the account offered in Kirk/Raven/Schofield (above, n. 6) 351.

15 C. H. Kahn, "The Greek verb 'to be' and the concept of being", *Foundations of Language* 2 (1966); *The Verb 'be' in ancient Greek* (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1973); "Retrospect on the verb 'to be' and the concept of being", in S. Knuuttila and J. Hintikka, eds., *The Logic of Being* (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1986); and *art. cit.* above, n. 4.

16 See above, pp. 176, 177.

17. *Arete* and Gender-differentiation in Socrates/Plato and Aristotle

To those first reading the dialogues of Plato one of a number of puzzling usages is that of the word "virtue" (*arete*). Tending to equate it with something like "morality" (a translation of the term in fact favoured by Waterfield in his recent translation of the *Republic* [Oxford 1993]), they are puzzled, and understandably so, to find Socrates talking about the "virtue" of a pruning knife in terms of its ability to trim vines (*Resp*. 353a1–5), and so forth. Once the initial surprise is over, one soon realizes that the word *arete* is being used as basically a word of "efficiency", and that Socrates is arguing that a person can be "efficient/inefficient" in the performance of a task in the area of conduct in the way a pruning knife can be efficient/inefficient in the performance of its task in the area of trimming vines.

While this notion takes some digesting, it does at least shed a little light on the so-called Socratic paradox that "virtue is knowledge". Once this is seen to mean something like "efficiency (in the sphere of conduct) is know-how (in the sphere of conduct)" a large part of the supposed paradox falls away, though we are still left to face a series of problems raised by one major remaining presupposition on Socrates' part, and that is his unabashedly functionalist psychology. As well as all artefacts, all living creatures including ourselves, says Socrates, have a function, definable in terms of what each thing does uniquely or best (*Resp*. 352e3). So, since what a knife does best if not uniquely is cut, cutting must be its goal or function. In similar fashion, since what a human being is able to do both uniquely and best is think rationally and exercise moral responsibility for action, these must be a human being's function.

Within the framework of this very intellectualist-looking ethical system four major types of virtue (drawn from Pindar) are, along with the functionalist psychology, set out and espoused without argument: knowledge (*phronesis*), bravery, self-control or balance (*sophrosyne*), and justice (*dikaiosyne*) (*Resp*. 4). Each, when applied to a society or a soul (each of these in turn being deemed by Socrates to be tripartite),

turns out to be the most efficient functioning of either one part of the soul/society or of all three parts in combination.

As has frequently been pointed out (most recently by Waterfield), this striking set of ideas fails, unfortunately, in a very significant way to deal with Thrasymachus' claim that *arete* is not necessarily good. What it appears to demonstrate, if it demonstrates anything, is that an efficient society might reasonably be described in terms of the sound functioning of its component parts, and that, *pari passu*, a human being operating at a level of optimal efficiency might reasonably be described in terms of the sound functioning of the "parts" of his/her psyche. But nothing has been said by Socrates to demonstrate that moral goodness (where in his grammar of goodness "goodness *for*" and "goodness *at*" are clearly pivotal senses of the term) and "moral efficiency" (*arete*) are one and the same. What Thrasymachus is attacking is the notion that *arete* is *intrinsically* good, not simply good in the sense of efficient at achieving certain specified goals in the intellectual/moral sphere.

Equally disconcerting is the stress on *arete* as being a state of balance within the organism (be that organism a society or a psyche.) While it can be, and has been argued that Socrates is talking here only of an indispensable condition for *arete*, leaving it open for us to assume that, like everyone else, he thinks of *arete* as being in fact intrinsically relational, it remains true that the overall impression left by a reading of the work is that it is for him dominantly if not exclusively a word indicating balance within an organism. If this is true, he risks being accused of winning his case by the invention of a language private unto himself.

On the positive side of the ledger is the well known and remarkable view that, given appropriate genetic background and education, women will be just as able as men to manage his Just Society. Since nothing is said on the matter either way, it is natural to infer from this that, for the Socrates/Plato of the *Republic*, the *arete* evinced by male and female guardians in such a society will be the same species of *arete*, in that what each of them, male and female, achieves is one and the same goal or *telos*. And for all we know that is precisely what the Socrates/Plato of the *Republic* thought. However this may be, in the *Timaeus* we appear to be looking at a view of *arete* in which gender *differentiation* rather than any putative gender sameness is paramount,

and here we may be entering upon unfamiliar terrain. And since this part of the *Timaeus* remains little read, even by those otherwise well-read in Plato, the point is worth some investigation. (For purposes of the following discussion I shall assume that the position being put forward by Timaeus is, in broad outline at least, that of Plato at the time of writing of the dialogue).

In the closing pages of this dialogue Timaeus puts forward a view of re-incarnation which adds a crucial new component to the one usually proffered by him (or by others), and that is that there is a descent within humans themselves, from males to females. According to his account, the first generation of humans created by the Demiurge seems to have consisted of (ungendered) males. Those who lived morally good lives returned to life again as males, this time with sexual apparatus. Those who had lived *immoral* lives returned as (gendered) females; and those who had lived *unintelligent* lives returned as animals, those that had abused *nous* coming back as birds, those that had relied simply on *thymos* coming back as land animals, and those who had been guided only by their *epithymetikon* coming back as creeping creatures, fish and shellfish.

It is a startling vision of the world, in which living things, ranging from female humans to molluscs, are apparently seen by Plato as appropriate punishment-receptacles for male human souls that have manifested either immorality or stupidity. What is specifically startling as far as the issue of *arete* is concerned could be summed up as follows:

1. The apparent conflation of virtuous activity and knowledge often attributed to Socrates is conspicuous by its absence, possibly because this part of the *Timaeus*, like so much else, may well be drawing upon Pythagorean sources, especially the lost works of Philolaus.

2. The original, and apparently the "basic" human soul is, for Timaeus, male; a female human soul is a punished version of a male one.

3. The natural tendency of female humans is to various forms of moral fault, specifically "cowardice", and more generally to "immorality" (*adikia*) as a whole.

4. The natural conclusion of Timaeus' argument is that the struggle back to male status for a soul undergoing punishment by being reincarnated as a female will be a grievous one, given that the punish-

ment-prison that is a female is no neutral jail-house of bricks and mortar but a living entity instinct with a tendency to immorality.

It is tempting to dismiss this discouraging scenario, with its clear implication that for Plato there is not a level playing field for males and females in the quest for *arete*, as a view espoused in a "mythical" dialogue only, and/or as a view placed carefully in the mouth of a Pythagoreanizing speaker, possibly invented for the occasion, and hence a view in no way to be attributed to Plato. But this would be premature. The dialogue is said on several occasions to be a likely account (*eikos logos*) of the way things began, and on one occasion the "particularly likely" (*malista eikos*) account. At no point is it called "merely" likely, as some translators seem to think, forgetting that, according to the metaphysics both of the *Republic* and the *Timaeus*, the physical universe, being an *eikon* ("likeness") of the Form universe, operates at the level of "likely" (*eikos*) description. Of these likely descriptions those with maximum verisimilitude will qualify as "true opinions", and this is a point beyond which God himself cannot go in describing the physically real, the necessary condition of the existence of a stable intentional object not having been fulfilled. Even when, after the demythologization they think necessary has been performed, and the Demiurge reduced to a symbol or possibly done away with, reductionists are always still left with World Soul as the God of the *Timaeus*, and here there is no doubt that true opinion (i. e., the highest form of likelihood), not knowledge, is, in accord with basic Platonic metaphysics and epistemology, the maximum it achieves.

As for the notion that the view is that of a Pythagorean, not Plato, this would have some plausibility were it not for the fact that in a later dialogue, the *Laws*, where there is no suggestion of a "mythological" and/or "Pythagorean" context, Plato returns to the topic. As far as women are concerned, in Book 6 (781a–b) the Athenian, *nemine contradicente*, repeats popular prejudices already apparent in the *Republic* and *Timaeus* when he says that "half of the human race – the female sex – is generally predisposed by its weakness to undue secrecy and craft"; and that "woman – left without chastening restraint – is not, as you might fancy, merely half the problem; she is in fact a two-fold and more than a two-fold problem, in proportion as her native disposition (*physis*) is inferior (*cheiron*) to man's". If there were any doubt that by "inferior" here we are meant to understand "morally inferior", the

matter is settled in Book 12 (944d), in a passage where the Athenian is discussing the appropriate punishment for the coward who flees the battle and throws away his shield the faster to do so. Quite the most appropriate punishment, he says, were it possible, would be the transformation of such a man into a woman!

On the face of it, then, Platonic (though not necessarily, of course, Socratic) theory, in the *Timaeus* and *Laws*, is one of the differential *arete* of males and females. And as I have put it elsewhere (*Oikoumene*, in press), it would be natural to infer from it that "in the *Laws* the role and status of women would remain at best that which it had been immemorially in Greek society. But Plato surprises us with a remarkable statement, going far beyond anything ever envisaged in the *Republic*, that a good society will, as far as possible, educate every man and woman within it equally, if only on the grounds that to do otherwise would be a gross mismanagement by society of the totality of its human resources (804d-805b), and that 'it is pure folly that men and women do not unite to follow the same pursuits with all their energies' (805a). Whatever the drift of the gender-differentiation theory as a piece of abstract reasoning, Plato the practical politician of the *Laws* is prepared to back away from it if pressed by the more realistic demands of day to day politics".

While it is gratifying to learn that, in the end, Plato did not allow what is ultimately a very discouraging view of gender-differentiation to get in the way of good sense, it does seem to have been part of his philosophy of *arete* to the end, and I turn now to see how his pupil Aristotle dealt with the matter. I deal first with the question of the "intellectualist" cast of Socratic ethics.

Famously, Aristotle defined *arete* as "a state of character (*hexis*) concerned with choice, lying in a mean, i.e., a mean relative to us, this being determined by a rational principle, and by that principle by which a man of practical wisdom would determine it" (*EN* 1106b36–1107a2). In so arguing, he takes direct issue with the Socrates of the dialogues, claiming that he is in his own view of *arete* partly right and partly wrong: "in thinking that all the virtues were forms of practical wisdom he was wrong, but in saying they *implied* practical wisdom he was right" (*EN* 1144b18–21). The result, he then goes on to argue, is that Socrates can never deal satisfactorily with the phenomenon of incontinence (*akrasia*) (*EN* 1145b21 ff). On the other hand, to the

discomfiture of many commentators, he seems to conclude his discussion by affirming that Socrates, if correctly understood, has in fact got things right, since, in the matter of the practical syllogism, the incontinent person never in fact *has* "scientific" knowledge to start with (*EN* 1147b13–19); the minor premise of the syllogism is not for such a person a universal judgement in the way it needs to be. So Socrates is right in his surmise that there never *is* a case of anyone having *genuine* knowledge on a moral issue and then having it supposedly "mastered by something else and dragged about like a slave" (*EN* 1145b22–24).

Whether or not Socrates would have recognized (and/or accepted) Aristotle's interpretation of his stance (and that interpretation has itself been greatly disputed) in terms of what one might call mitigated rather than extreme intellectualism, it seems clear that Aristotle's own discussion of what he calls "moral" virtues continues in the Socratic/Platonic tradition of intellectualism, though it is now undoubtedly intellectualism of a significantly mitigated nature. Does this mean that he would have found Timaeus's/Plato's critical distinction between immorality and ignorance something unsocratic, in the way he would have undoubtedly found that dialogue's gender-based morality unsocratic (see *Pol.* 1260a13 ff)? It is hard to be sure. The ignorance in question is clearly ignorance of facts, like the ignorance of those who have lost the knowledge of the need to pay attention to what goes on in the sky (*Tim.* 91e1–6), and in general the ignorance of those who have apparently abandoned the knowledge that the best guide to virtue and happiness is *nous*, not the *thymos* or, still worse, the *epithymetikon* (*ibid.*). But as such it is also of course culpable ignorance, since the facts in question are facts a knowledge of which is integral to the moral life; so their descent is consequently to the lowest rungs of the scale of lives.

Does this mean that for Timaeus/Plato immorality (*adikia*) is, by contrast, a disposition or state of soul wholly divorced from thought? This seems very unlikely. Much more probable, it seems to me, is the possibility that Timaeus/Plato thought the difference between the two states to be as follows. In the case of immorality *nous* has not been abandoned; the woman that an erstwhile immoral man becomes simply possesses such *nous* to a lower degree, her soul being that of a man *manqué*. So, whatever her faults, she has not done that which is utterly damaging to her interests. Ignorant men, by contrast, no longer make

use of their greatest protection, "the circuits in the head", but follow rather "those parts of the soul that are in the breast", with the result that they "never have any use for philosophy and pay no heed to the heavens" (*Tim*. 91e2–6).

If all this means what it appears to mean, "ignorance", as understood by Timaeus/Plato, is particularly destructive because it manifests the worst form of wilfulness, that of active abandonment, apparently, of what is known, at any rate initially, to be the right path. I say "apparently", because he uses a locution – "no longer make use of the circuits in the head" – that is sufficiently general to admit of the possibility of extenuating circumstances, like bad upbringing and a defective physical constitution (*Tim*. 87b). But they are never so extenuating, it seems, as to free anyone from the obligation to "make every possible effort to flee from badness, whether with the help of one's upbringing, or the pursuits or studies one undertakes, and to seize its opposite" (*ibid*.), at the peril, it would appear, of the consequences just described for failure to do so.

Would Socrates have recognized this version of intellectualist ethics as his own, or rejected it as an overstatement? Many would say the latter, and ascribe the whole theory to some Pythagorean, possibly Philolaus. But before accepting this conclusion we should pause awhile to look at an earlier dialogue, the *Republic*, in which a statement made in the closing pages is worth consideration. In a little-discussed passage of the Myth of Er Plato tells how those souls who have practiced what he calls "popular" (as distinct from "philosophical") *arete* in their previous life (*Resp*. 619c7-d1), and have received appropriate rewarded for this during their recent discarnate existence, are in particular danger of making a choice detrimental to their best interests when, by the banks of the River of Forgetfulness, they make their choice of a new life from the sample lives presented to them. Their specific mistake, it seems, is to make an error over the "*taxis* of the soul", which seems to mean something like "the soul's disposition to good or evil" that goes with various types of life. (Waterfield's translation "temperament" misses the mark). As an example Er mentions how the first soul whose turn it was to choose a new life immediately went for "the most powerful dictatorship available", oblivious of the fact that the life in question had attached to it a fearful ending ("the eating of his children and other horrible crimes"), but much more im-

portantly, unaware of the *danger to his well-being* of the *taxis to evil* involved in that life – a critical item which, unlike the description of the dreadful ending of the life in question, calculatedly receives no mention here or in any other sample of a possible future life (*Resp*. 619b, 618b).

As in the case of the closing pages of the *Timaeus*, it is easy to dismiss all this as "just a myth", and hence of little philosophical import. But this would, I think, be premature. Though the *Republic* account does not make the gender distinction drawn in the *Timaeus* account, or the distinction between ignorance and immorality, they are united on the critical point of the self-inflicted damage to the soul that can stem from espousing forms of *arete* other than "philosophical". In this regard nothing seems to have changed since the first appearance of the doctrine in dialogues as early as the *Meno*. So while Socrates might indeed not have recognized various features of the *Timaeus* account, there is some reason to believe that, on the assumption, *argumenti causa*, that the distinction between popular and philosophical *arete* is of Socratic rather than simply Platonic origin, Socrates would have been not unsympathetic to its general drift.

Be this as it may, the position of Aristotle on the question of *arete* and gender distinction shows an important move away from at any rate the Platonic position. In a well known passage in the *Politics* (1260a13 ff), Aristotle claims that, in the realm of "intellectual" virtues, women are distinguishable from men in possessing the power of determination, in just the same way as men, but "unauthoritatively", whereas children possess it in an incomplete fashion. As far as the moral virtues are concerned, women and children in similar fashion possess only "that *amount* (*hoson*) (of moral *arete*) which goes with their station. Whence it is evident that, although moral virtue is common to all those we have spoken of, the temperance of a man and a woman are not the same, nor their courage nor their justice, though Socrates thought otherwise; for the courage of the man consists in commanding, the woman's in obeying", etc.

The latter point is pivotal in pinpointing the new approach. Driven by the same functionalist psychology that drove Plato if not Socrates (*Resp*. 352d8 ff), Aristotle now argues that the "inferiority" of women (1254b14, *cheiron*) is a function of the role they play, in the home and in any well-ordered society, by obeying the commands of husbands/

rulers. For Socrates/(the early?)Plato the distinction of importance was between popular and philosophical *arete*, without reference to gender distinction; for Timaeus/(the later?) Plato the distinction between popular and philosophical *arete* still obtains, but grafted on to it there is now a further gender-distinction of major import; while for Aristotle the distinction needing to be made is straightforwardly gender-bound, but now in terms of a distribution of *quanta* of *one and the same* (intellectual or moral) *arete* appropriate to the ruling/obedience roles played by males and females in the family and in society, not in terms of a distribution across humankind of two quite different *types* of *arete*, of which the first – driven largely by *nous* – is of its nature male-bound, and greatly superior to the other. In view of this, one can say that, despite the chagrin with which Aristotle's views on women are usually, and with no small justification received, they are, ironically, views which constitute significant progress over what had gone before, thanks not least to his sounder appreciation of *arete* in the human situation. Whatever the inadequacy and unacceptability, in its turn, of his own new doctrine of gender-differentiation by reference to supposedly differential quanta (or "amounts") of *arete*, its great virtue (to use the word) is the fact that it offers an opportunity for gender-differentiation and its supposed implications to be discussed in an atmosphere devoid of a pre-judgement about some putatively female inclination to depravity. And that, it seems to me, is a matter of moment in the history of philosophy, whether or not it has been appreciated as such.

18. Aristotle, Empiricism, and the *Anthropinon Agathon*

In this paper I plan to look first at a concept immortalized by Aristotle in his *Ethics*, that of the so-called "good for man" (*anthropinon agathon*), even if what he had to say about it has been from the start and continues to be a matter of some dispute. I shall then pass on, in part 2, to some of the criticisms that have been levelled at the concept, and at concepts closely tied to it, from, roughly, the age of Galileo till our own day. Finally, in part 3, I shall discuss a number of reasons for thinking that, although many of the criticisms still seem sound enough to many philosophers, there are features of modern thinking that look like a remarkable return to major contentions of Aristotle, whatever the continuing disagreements.

History

If a good definition is characterized by, among other things, clarity and lack of ambiguity, then Aristotle's definition of what he calls the *anthropinon agathon*, often translated "the good for man" (*EN* 1097a15 ff), is for many interpreters only a doubtfully good one. The *anthropinon agathon*, he says, is "activity of soul in accordance with virtue, and if there are several, in accordance with the most excellent and most complete <of them>"(*EN* 1098a16-18). Is this a manner of life which is good *for* us, or a manner of life *at* which we (by contrast with say plants and animals) are uniquely or particularly good? Is it possibly both? Given that the word "virtue", *arete*, is also in classical Greek the word for efficiency (allowing Socrates to spend a lifetime comparing virtuous actions to the efficient practicing of various arts and crafts), one might guess here that the "good" in question is to be understood as what we, as human beings, are either uniquely good at or particularly good at doing.

This is certainly in line with the functionalism that pervades the *Ethics*, following upon a famous definition of function (*ergon*) that Aristotle draws gratefully from the *Republic*: the function of anything, says Socrates there, is that which it does, not simply well, but uniquely or best (353a10–11). The rest of the *Republic* then consists of an at-

tempt by Socrates to show that the performance of its function by x also invariably produces the greatest good for x; in the case of ourselves, what we do uniquely or best is exercise intelligence and moral sensibility/responsibility, and it is this that does *us* good and produces *eudaimonia*.

If this interpretation is correct, it has the advantage of allowing us to answer our original question with the answer "Both"; the *anthropinon agathon* is what is good for man precisely because it coincides with what he is uniquely or especially good at. But we are still far from complete clarity. Can we agree with Aristotle on what he means by "good" in his definition, or by "soul" (*psyche*), or by "virtue", and if we can, can we agree with his descriptions of what they are? And if, finally, we can achieve agreement on all these things, can we make sense of what he means by "the most excellent (*ariste*) and most complete (*teleiotate*)" among the virtues?

These are all significant questions, worth a book rather than a paper. Let me here just go along for the moment with the consensus of scholarship on the meaning and putative reference of the terms just mentioned, and signal some of the disagreements among scholars about the adjectives *ariste* and *teleiotate*, especially the latter, to allow me to get to the heart of my paper.

On the face of it, *teleios* can mean "complete" in the sense of "comprising all parts/aspects" of x or in the sense of the "most perfect" one of a set of x's. A famous term first used by Hardie[1] for the latter was "dominance", in which all other virtues are seen as means towards the achievement of this particular virtue as the goal or end (*telos*). The other possible model is that of "inclusion", in which the other virtues can be included in the most perfect or most complete one as aspects of it. Scholars like Kenny and Nussbaum[2] have opted for the dominance model; Ackrill[3] has adopted the inclusion model. Others have gone for variants on this. Bostock,[4] for example, has argued that Aristotle is driven by the inclusion model here in Book 1 of the *Ethics* but uses the dominance model when he revisits the topic in Book 10.

I have referred in passing to Book 10, and this has notoriously complicated matters by its apparent move away from the pragmatic vision of Book 1 to a more intellectualist one in Book 10, in which the most perfect virtue is now said to be *sophia*, and in particular *sophia* as instanced in a life of *theoria*. This has led scholars like Ackrill (*art.*

cit.) to claim a fundamental weakness, if not indeed incoherence, in Aristotle's views on the good life/the life for man; in Book 1, they say, the fully virtuous are supposed to attain fulfilment (*eudaimonia*) within the framework of the polis, in Book 10 they only attain it in a quietistic world of contemplation far removed from concerns with the polis. Others, anxious to preserve coherence in Aristotle, have talked of degrees of *eudaimonia*, in which the happiness achieved by the god-like, fully virtuous soul in *sophia*, as instanced in a life of *theoria*, is indeed the most complete, since, as he puts it earlier (1097a26–34), it is in fact "invariably choiceworthy in itself and never in virtue of something else". But this is not to say that the next degree of *eudaimonia*, that constituted by practical wisdom (*phronesis*) and the practice of the moral virtues, is not also genuinely *eudaimonia*, or that the lowermost order of *eudaimonia*, that brought about by possession of the material and social goods of which Aristotle so often speaks, is not a genuine form of *eudaimonia* either. On this scenario, sketched most recently by Lefka,[5] the *anthropinon agathon* seen as a life of *theoria* is to be thought of as a goal open to all but attainable only by a few, all within a context of *degrees* of *eudaimonia* at least one of which is indeed attainable by everyone.

I am myself inclined to accept this latter interpretation of Aristotle's not easily reconcilable statements. But even if we do, we are not out of the woods yet, because his views on the *anthropinon agathon* and *eudaimonia* form part of a cluster of concepts that cannot really be passed over. These constitute the functionalist doctrine of *telos*, *ergon* and *arete* which drives Aristotle's argument on the *anthropinon agathon* as it drives so much else in his thinking. And to this we must now turn.

Some problems

Up to this point in the paper I have simply done my best to get Aristotle right. But this of course is not enough; on the assumption that we have indeed *got* him right, we must now proceed to the question, *Is* he in fact right? Historically, his teleological thinking, along with his doctrine of fixed forms in nature (*Physics 2*) and his continued belief, following Plato, in the referentiality of general terms, was still largely accepted philosophical wisdom till relatively recent times, when it has come under attack from many quarters. The theory as applied to the

macrocosm felt the first shocks when Galileo first noticed that Jupiter was being orbited by (at least) four moons; as applied to the microcosm in various ways it has been under attack basically from the time of Ockham, when an alternate to essentialism was first propounded at length, up to the contemporary epoch, when general terms are now thought of by many as doing anything but refer, and philosophy has become a study of states of affairs rather than putative referents of such terms, including terms such as *psyche*, *nous*, *ergon*, *arete* and *eudaimonia*. Or to put it differently, we have moved from thinking of knowledge as a vision *of x* (whatever x's putative ontological status) to an awareness *that p*, to the detriment (or so it would seem; and I'll be returning to this) of pseudo-entities like essences and goals, including that supposed goal for ourselves as humans constituted by the *anthropinon agathon*.

In place of Aristotelian eudaimonism have come doctrines of duty and rights. In place of a doctrine of fixed forms in nature has come a doctrine of unceasing change, and of the survival of the fittest. In place of a teleology which affirmed that we have eyes in order to see has come a theory which affirms that those with eyes see, and have the advantages attendant upon this. Along with this has come an attack upon any attempt to continue to see nature as a hierarchy, with *homo sapiens* firmly and conveniently ensconced at its apex with rights subsuming those of supposedly lesser creatures.

In terms of our life in the polis, the notion of a supposed end or good for either ourselves or society has been overtaken by a doctrine of the maximization of individual freedom, and many are now satisfied that Mill's harm principle is a better guide to the assessment of conduct, personal and civic, than some essence and goal of man constituting his supposed good.

But I have no wish to belabour this point. For a great number of philosophers Aristotelianism, with its essentialism, referentialism, functionalism, eudaimonisic ethic and assertion of man's unchanging, dominating role in an unchanging universe, is dead, never to rise again, and good riddance. Need one discuss this any further? Well, yes we do. And this leads me to the third part of my paper.

A return to the Greeks?

Let me begin with a curious event (or should that be "non-event"?) of the mid-eighteenth century. At around that time thinking people, from philosophers to politicians to simply interested observers of the human scene, just ceased to believe in the existence of witches and, consequently, in the supposed need for their persecution. Three centuries of anti-witch hysteria, a disgrace to the human race, came to an end, both in Europe and North America, almost overnight. And pretty well without argument. For a number of possible reasons, none of them to do to do with the propounding and acceptance of rational arguments concerning the matter at hand,[6] the human race just "grew up" in a certain respect, and a horror in our history was terminated. Almost overnight, a universal agreement seems to have come into being that a particular way in which we had been treating a sub-group of ourselves was an abomination, *Malleus Maleficarum* or not, and the agreement has held firmly ever since; any attempt to reverse this stance we now feel instinctively would be pilloried by thinking people across the globe, whatever their culture. If asked why, it is probable that people would say that certain norms of conduct simply bind us all as humans, though they might be hard put to it to defend just why they hold such a view.

I mention this case because it runs curiously counter to what was going on in the philosophical world at the time, when essentialism and universalism, which, in some form or other, seem to underpin the demise of the persecution of so-called witches, were in fact significant objects of attack, particularly by thinkers such as David Hume.

Before commenting on what seems to me the significance of this, let me move on to some further examples, beginning with the large-scale abandonment of slavery, in North and South America, in the 19th century, and in most other places in the 20th. This time, it has to be said, moral argument *was* involved, but the result has been the same. On the occasions that we hear about the continuance of pockets of slavery in, say, parts of Africa, we are appalled at what seems to us the clear flouting of basic human rights, and no time is wasted in bringing the matter to the attention of bodies like the United Nations.

Closer to our own time, the determination not to repeat the horrors of World War Two has led to the universal acceptance of notions such as "command responsibility" in warfare, and more generally to

such notions as that of a war crime, and perhaps most significantly, that of a "crime against humanity".

What, it might be asked, has this to do with Aristotle's *Ethics*? I would say, a lot. What we have, in our times, is a world, particularly the Anglo-American world and those influenced by it, which is driven in large part by variants of utilitarianism and consequentialism. The goal, according to Bentham and Mill, is the greatest happiness of the greatest number. There is nothing "essentially" good or evil, and no definition of a supposed "essence" of man. Man is as we choose to define him, and his "good" is in terms of the possible benefits to the maximum number of the grouping so defined.

It is, on the face of it, a world where absolutes, including the supposedly absolutely universal applicability of particular moral values, have no place. Yet since the eighteenth century we have seen the steady rise of a belief in such universally applicable standards, many of them now enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, and adhered to (at least in theory) by nations and cultures of very great degrees of difference in so many other respects. A number of these I have already mentioned, and their number continues to rise. It is only a matter of time, it seems, before a whole set of rights of women, children, the disadvantaged, and other groupings will be thought of as self-evident, and people will look back in wonderment that humans ever imagined otherwise. And the same might well prove true of certain animal rights as well.

What is happening here? Something wonderful, I would say. After centuries of philosophical and political struggle, we seem to have reached a stage, spurred on by particular horrors such as the persecution of so-called witches, the continuance of chattel-slavery within so-called just societies, and the horrors of two world wars, to set aside the unending conflict between essentialist and consequentialist visions of morality and to adopt a new approach. This new approach, it seems to me, combines much of the best in both old-style essentialism and consequentialism, with few if any of their disadvantages.

To begin with consequentialism. The great virtue of theories of this type (such as utilitarianism in one variant or other) is the commitment to the maximization of happiness, and the utilization of the harm principle as a major guide to right conduct. Its ongoing problem, say its critics, is that its apparent acceptance that a failure to attain

universality is something near-inevitable will in all likelihood guarantee the permanent disadvantaging of certain members of the group. Old-style essentialism, by contrast, whether founded on divine *fiat* (as in Plato's *Timaeus* and various systems of religious belief across the centuries) or, as in Aristotelianism, on the structure of the real as such, has the benefit of universality, but has been greatly criticized as being untenable on a number of grounds, as I mentioned earlier on the paper.

Up to now, it has been largely accepted among philosophers that the two stances are simply irreconcilable, but I myself am not convinced of this. The way is open, it seems to me, for progress in terms of what I shall call, paradoxically, empirical essentialism. According to this, we agree among ourselves to be bound, simply as humans, by certain norms of conduct, whether or not we feel we are able to elaborate arguments in favour of our choices, and whatever the philosophical label, essentialist or consequentialist, we pin upon ourselves. How we come to such agreements is itself an interesting question, and probably involves reaction to circumstance (like what we did to ourselves during two world wars) at least as much as simply philosophical reasoning. But the nature of the agreements, as enshrined in such documents as the UN Charter and any number of constitutions of various countries, is clear enough: we are no longer willing to allow theoretical disagreements among philosophers to stop us from binding ourselves as humans to universal standards in a forever-widening sphere of conduct.

Which brings us back to Aristotle. My argument is that, when he talks of the *anthropinon agathon*, his essentialist, universalist conclusions have proved to be enduring, and have indeed come into their own in our own times, after a lengthy period of eclipse, even if the assumptions he used as their underpinning continue to be criticized. And possibly we should be looking to another Greek, Xenophanes, as offering a reason why. In a famous line, Xenophanes says, "God did not reveal all in the beginning; we learn more with the passage of time" (fr. 18, DK). It is easy to read this as talking simply about the learning of facts about the world. But at least as interesting, it seems to me, is the possibility that it includes learning, with the passage of time, the pressure of circumstance, the force of argument, and the growth of self-knowledge, which norms of conduct we desire and agree to bind

ourselves to, simply as humans, and universally, whether or not we feel able to offer reasons which we might hope that all would accept. What we have here is a doctrine of moral growth that does not involve moral relativism, and a doctrine of essentialism that involves universal commitment rather than universal *ousia*.

Something Aristotle rejected outright in the *Physics*, that is, the possibility of evolution, paradoxically helps his case in the matter of human conduct and the *anthropinon agathon*. Part of our own evolution is moral, allowing us to appreciate, with the passage of time, a growing range of conduct that we think should reasonably bind us all simply as humans. It carries with it no particular doctrine of the essence of man, but it does include a commitment to, and a determination to achieve, all that Aristotle was really after, and that is the good for man, and in the sense of man *as such* and in the *totality* of his number, not merely in some *majority* among that number.

Lest it be thought that we are looking at something exceptional here, and to that degree an unreliable indicator of anything, I need to add that what I have been saying goes for Aristotle's entire teleological and functionalist apparatus underlying the doctrine of the *anthropinon agathon*. Here again, at first glance it would seem that a Darwinian approach and an Aristotelian one are simple incompatibles, where *tertium non datur*. Either (Aristotle) I have eyes in order to see, or (Darwin) in possessing eyes I see, and thereby have an advantage, in terms of survival, over creatures that do not, but it cannot be said that I have eyes in order to see. And yet it proves almost impossible, even for the most die-hard Darwinian, to engage in a conversation about biological forms without using the language of that very teleology which he/she so ardently rejects.

One way of dealing with this problem is in historical terms or psychological terms; that is, by maintaining how hard it is to sluice ancient habits out of our system, or to give up a doctrine that has always had a high comfort component for us. But I would suggest that, while these explanations may have worth, a more philosophically satisfying explanation is in fact available, and one which, paradoxically, manages to find common ground between apparently irreconcilable opponents. To the question, "What is the function of the heart?" the Aristotelian answer (closely following Plato, *Resp. 1*, *ad fin.*) will be, "To promote the circulation of the blood". While "in order to produce

rhythmic sounds" might also be put forward as a function, it will fail as the required explanation because the production of rhythmic sounds is not what the heart does uniquely or best. But in contemporary terms too, Aristotle's answer will be perfectly acceptable, though this time not in terms of some supposed *ousia* of the heart, but rather in terms of its perceived biological history. That is, in the words of de Sousa, the natural function of x will consist of those effects, "among all those produced in the past, which made the organ in question more fit, or more likely to get reproduced".[7]

If this agreement sounds too good to be true, it probably is, in the sense that with the great gain comes a significant loss too. Because, while concluding in simply empirical terms to the existence of function, and the very same notion of function at which Aristotle arrived by reference to a supposed *ousia*, the modern empiricist stops short of any notion that such a function is automatically productive of what is by definition *agathon*, a "good thing" or "good state of affairs". It may or may not, depending on circumstance. The classic example of one which was not, to quote de Sousa again, "is the Irish elk, in which the ever-larger antlers preferred by the females eventually became too gigantic to live with", leading to the extinction of the species.

But the loss seems to me relatively minor by contrast with what has been agreed upon. Because the concepts of functionalism, teleology, and, in the more specific terms of the present paper, the notion of the fulfilment of the specific function of man that will produce the *anthropinon agathon*, have now been given in recent times a new life and vigour which would only a short time ago have been rejected by many philosophers as impossible. While it remains true that empiricism will never in all circumstances fit an essentialist template, as we saw in the case of the Irish elk, in a very large number if not the great majority of cases it looks as though it will, and a "uniquely or best" explanation of function will turn out to coincide with one of perceived adaptation for reproduction.

A very good example of this is provided by the subject of this paper, the *anthropinon agathon*. The profoundest anti-essentialist, it seems to me, could well finish up agreeing with Aristotle, and on the purely empirical grounds of perceived biological history, that the function of man is indeed, in part, the operation of intelligence, in the sense that the effects of the operation of intelligence, "among all those

produced in the past, made man more fit, or likely to get reproduced". And the same might well go for that other aspect of man's function according to Aristotle, the operation of moral sensibility. Here again the profoundest anti-essentialist might well concede to Aristotle that, in terms of our powers of reproduction, not simply as individuals but as members of a community that has to cohere together or perish, the function of man will include the operation of a moral sense as well, and in particular a moral sense of fairness and justice, in the sense that the effects of the operation of moral sensibility, "among all those produced in the past, made man more fit, or likely to get reproduced *as a member of a viable society*".

So we have come, it seems, full circle. Aristotelian functionalism has returned, even if supported by arguments he might not have approved of. And I strongly suspect that, in view of the significance of what has been agreed upon, however unexpectedly the way the agreement was reached, the Stagirite would not be unhappy with the bargain.

Notes

1 W. F. R. Hardie, "The Final Good in Aristotle's Ethics", *Philosophy* 40 (1965), pp. 277–295.

2 Anthony Kenny, "Happiness", *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 66 (1965/6), pp. 93–102; Martha Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness* (Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 373–379.

3 J. L. Ackrill, "Aristotle on *Eudaimonia*", in *Essays on Aristotle's Ethics*, ed. A. Oksenberg Rorty (University of California Press, 1980), pp. 15–33.

4 D. Bostock, *Aristotle's Ethics* (Oxford University Press, 2000).

5 Aikaterini Lefka, "La notion de l'*eudaimonia* dans la pensée d'Aristote" (article awaiting publication). Among other things, Lefka engages in a very useful discussion of the views of the authors mentioned in nn. 1–4 above, along with those of several others. I am grateful to Dr. Lefka for allowing me to consult her work at this prepublication stage.

6 See Hugh Trevor-Roper, *The European Witch Craze of the 16th and 17th Centuries* (New York: Harper and Row, 1956). According to Trevor-Roper (pp. 180–182), the cause of the overthrow of the prevailing demonology was probably simply the atmosphere of the "new

philosophy" of Nature and its operations, spearheaded by people such as Bacon and Descartes, along with English deism and German quietism. In this new world, where a single benevolent, "scientific" deity prevailed, not a deity in everlasting conflict with supposed forces of darkness, the belief in witches (along with a lot of other superstitions) simply collapsed, without apparent need for specific arguments of refutation.

7 Ronald de Sousa, *The Literary Review of Canada* 12.7 (2004) p. 6.

19. Ficino's *Symposium*

Since I cannot be sure how much my readership knows of Ficino or his *Symposium*, I shall begin with a short account of the relevant points of both.[1]

One of the most significant figures of the Italian Renaissance, Marsilio Ficino lived from 1434 to 1499, and spent his entire life in the city of Florence. Employed as a translator by the Medici, he published, among many things, the first Latin translation of the works of Plato from the original Greek. His book *De Amore* was published in 1469, a year after the completion of his translation, and later republished in a slightly expanded version under the title *Commentary on Plato's Symposium on Love*. It is to this second version that I shall be referring in my paper, using as shorthand the early title *De Amore*, as everyone else seems to have done since the beginning. I should add, as a final item in this very brief biography, that at some time between the publication of the two versions Ficino took holy orders.

The *De Amore* itself is set up as a quasi-historical event, with nine characters, a bishop, a doctor, Ficino's father, one of his teachers, two of his students, an admirer, a personal friend, and Ficino himself. They have dinner, after which the bishop and doctor take their leave. The remaining seven then listen to a reading of what Ficino calls "all the speeches" (*orationes*) of the *Symposium*, presumably in his own recently published translation. These speeches turn out to be seven in number, and each of the seven remaining guests is in theory expected to comment on one of them. In practice only five of them actually speak, one doing triple duty; and one of the two *kopha prosopa* is Ficino himself.

The speeches, following the order of the *Symposium*, are those of Phaedrus, Pausanias, Erixymachus, Aristophanes, Agathon, Socrates, and Alcibiades. But the five speakers are eclectic in how they deal with them. Those dealing with the speeches of Pausanias and Alcibiades have the distinction of not mentioning the *Symposium* at all, and only the speech of Socrates receives what one might call a detailed commentary. Which means that we do have something on the speech of Diotima at least. As for the rest of the speeches, while they contain

passing references to the *Symposium* (and other dialogues), they are really disquisitions on the various speakers' views on love and beauty.

I shall, accordingly, be spending most of my time on the so-called speech of Socrates. This covers a fair portion of Ficino's book, and I shall attempt to summarize his argument before coming to some conclusions on its merits. I shall also try to concentrate my attention on those parts of the discourse which touch directly on Plato's *Symposium*, passing over a great deal of no doubt fascinating but for our purposes not very relevant material.

The speaker, Tomasso Benci, begins with a re-affirmation of Diotima's argument that Love is not a god, but a *daemon*, intermediary, as he puts it, "between heavenly thing and earthly things". For Diotima, in the *Symposium*, this intermediary status allows Eros to serve as the contact point between ourselves and the gods. But Benci has other interests, and he launches at this point into a long account of what he takes to be Plato's views on *daemones* in general. His evidence, he says, comes from the *Symposium*, the *Phaedrus*, the *Philebus*, the *Laws* and the *Epinomis*. But it doesn't really. It comes rather from Chalcidius' *Commentary on the Timaeus*, which Ficino shamelessly plagiarizes, along with a fair amount of material from Proclus and possibly Iamblichus. And Aristotle is never far from the surface either.

According to Benci's account, there is a single soul of the world which gives it life. This world (which is in effect what Aristotle calls the sublunary sphere, and which Benci further equates with prime matter), is, up to but excluding the earth, inhabited by *daemones*; the earth has its own version of *daemones*, those rational creatures we call humans; and the stars and superlunary spheres have as their souls the gods, including the Supreme God. These gods, say Benci, are immortal and not subject to passions; humans are *both* mortal and subject to passions; and *daemones* are immortal but *also* subject to passions.

Refusing to engage with those (such as Proclus) who claim that some of these *daemones* are in fact evil, Benci simply assumes their goodness and care for humans, and follows pseudo-Denis in equating them with angels. He also calls the gods who move the spheres angels, referring to what seems to be their common consciousness as "the Angelic Mind" (which I take to be the Plotinian *Nous*, and on a certain reading of the *Philebus*, the Platonic version of *Nous* too, at any rate

as espoused in that particular dialogue). As for the *Ideai* or Forms, he takes them, in line with a long tradition, to be ideas or conceptions in the mind of what he sometimes calls God and sometimes the Supreme God.

I pass over a digression on the gifts given us by the souls that move the spheres, on astral bodies for souls, and much else, and return with Benci to Diotima's speech, and the description of the birth of the *daemon* Love from the union of Poros and Penia. This is the nearest we have to a line-by-line commentary in the whole book, and it is pretty well lifted from Plotinus (*Enn.* 2.5.2–10 and 5.8.13), and highly allegorical. Again I pass over the details, mentioning only two things that strike me as being particularly important. The first is Benci's reading of Metis as "Counsel", and as such "the ray of the Supreme God" and father of Poros. At a stroke Love is thus characterized as being in fact directly descended, not just from the god Metis, but from the Supreme God himself. The second is Benci's conclusion that, in humans, the *daemon* Love is in fact of five types, the heavenly and the vulgar at the extreme ends of the spectrum, for contemplating the Forms and for procreation respectively, and in the middle three particular passions or drives, to the life of contemplation, of voluptuousness and of activity respectively. Anticipating a later comment by Diotima (210a), he sees the origin of all love in the sight of bodily beauty, and goes on: "But the love of the contemplative man ascends from sight to intellect. That of the voluptuous man descends from sight to touch. That of the active man remains in sight. The love of the contemplative man turns towards the highest *daemon* rather than toward the lowest; that of the voluptuous man is directed toward the lowest *daemon*; and that of the active man keeps an equal distance from both. These three loves are given three names. The love of the contemplative man is called divine; that of the active man, human; that of the voluptuous man, beast-like" (6.8, *fin.*)

Returning to Benci's claim that Love descends directly from the Supreme God, we find him offering an interesting interpretation of Diotima's remark (203c) that Love was born to follow Aphrodite, and "is by nature a lover of beauty because Aphrodite is herself especially beautiful". This means, he says, "that [Love] kindles souls with a desire for the supreme and divine beauty, since he himself was born among those spirits which, being nearest to God, are supremely lighted

by the beauty of God, and to those same rays lift us" (9, *init.*). Using the language of illumination, descent and ascent, and emanation, he goes on a little later to say how the "ray of beauty which is Poros, and the father of Love, has the power to be reflected back to what it came from, and it draws the lover with it. First it descends from God", passing next through *Nous* ("Angel") and the soul, "and from the soul it easily emanates into the body prepared to receive it. Then from that body of a younger man it shines out, especially through the eyes, the transparent windows of the soul. It flies onward, through the air, and penetrating the eyes of an older man, pierces his soul, kindles his appetite, then leads the wounded soul and the kindled appetite to their healing and cooling, respectively, as it carries them with it to the same place from which it had itself descended, step by step, first to the body of the beloved, then to the soul, then to *Nous* ("Angel"), and finally to God, the first origin of the splendor" (*ibid.*).

Benci is now at last in a position to comment on Diotima's claim that the goal of love is *tokos en toi kaloi* (206b). And he does it in the striking sentence (11, *init.*), "[The purpose of love] is the desire for procreation with a beautiful object in order to make eternal life available to mortal things". This is then explained as a twofold operation: the physical desire of a man for handsome offspring by a beautiful woman, and the desire of his soul to reproduce the elegance of his learning "in some beautiful soul, that is to say, in some soul which is pure, intelligent, and excellent". He concludes wryly if not drily: "Of course we cannot see the soul itself. So we cannot see its beauty. But we can see the body, which is the shadow and image of the soul. And so, judging by its image, we assume that in a beautiful body there is a beautiful soul. That is why we prefer to teach men who are handsome" (*ibid.*).

That said, Benci returns to Diotima's earlier comment that "All of us are pregnant…both in body and in soul" (206c), interpreting it as a statement that soul and body each have desires for progeny. As far as the soul is concerned, he asks the (for him) rhetorical question, "Who will deny that the soul, immediately from a tender age, desires the true, the good, the virtuous, and the useful?" Then follows a disquisition, based largely on the *Meno*, to the effect that no one can seek without some prior notion of what is being sought, a notion which, along Stoic lines, he calls a *Ratio*, and along Platonic lines, a Form. He

mentions, as examples, notions such as sweetness and goodness (which, perhaps by anticipation, he calls "the Good").

At this point however he confesses to finding an apparent ambiguity (13, *init.*) in Plato's thinking. The picture painted so far is what we find in what he calls "the books which Plato wrote in his youth", and he names them as the *Phaedrus*, *Meno* and *Phaedo*. We need to wait till the *Republic*, Book 6, he says, to learn that, analogously to the light of the sun in regard to physical seeing, there is present in our intellect the light of God. It is a light which the eye of the soul never sees in this life. But, to the soul able to raise its eye to some Ratio or Idea *within* that light which it is seeking to know, that light will give off a sudden spark, and the Ratio or Idea in question will be understood.

But Benci has not finished yet with the notion of *tokos en toi kaloi*, and his next comments reveal a discomfort on Ficino's part with Plato's views on the homosexual drive which had emerged earlier in a major misquotation of the *Protagoras*. The opening lines of the dialogue, spoken by "a friend" to Socrates, read: "Where have you just come from, Socrates? No, don't tell me. It's pretty obvious you have been hunting the ripe and ready Alcibiades". Benci (presumably Ficino) unashamedly mistranslates the last sentence as "I suppose of course that you are returning from that hunting to which the virtuous character of Alcibiades always excites you"' (10). Now (14) he chides Plato for failing to see that, while a desire for copulation may be aroused by the sight of a beautiful body, only those drives which have as their "function" what he calls "fertilizing and procreating" are acceptable (*ibid.*). He then quotes the *Laws*, but, surprisingly, he does not quote one of the several passages in the *Laws* where homosexual intercourse is condemned as "unnatural", and on those grounds warranting the worst punishment a Greek state could hand out other than the death penalty, and that is, *atimia*, deprivation of all major civic rights. Perhaps he had intended to do so, but in a moment of inattention, while preoccupied perhaps with the notion of unnaturalness, he launches into a (totally irrelevant) attack on abortion instead.

The final sections of Benci's discourse deal with the concluding comments of Diotima, on the rise from the vision of the physically beautiful to *kala schemata* to Beauty itself. The interpretation is basically that of Proclus (*Elements of Theology*, 20 and 189) and Plotinus (*Enn.* 5.8.1–5), though as usual neither of these is mentioned. I shall

again pass over the details, merely mentioning that, in very broad terms, on this account the search for beauty begins in the world of the physical (which is called "matter"), rises next to Soul, and then to *Nous* (for which his term is "Angelic Mind"), and culminates in God, whom he calls, quoting Plato's *Parmenides* (137c–d), "the One". The beauty of the One, or God, he says, is the source of all other beauty, and "therefore the source of all love" (17).

He then concludes his discourse in a further, imagined address by Diotima to Socrates, and from it I shall select just one passage.

> " 'Thus the perfectly simple light of the One itself is infinite Beauty, because it is not soiled by the stains of Matter, as the beauty of the Body is, or changed by temporal progression, as the beauty of the soul is, or dissipated in multiplicity, as the beauty of *nous* is …. Similarly, light which is free from any body is infinite, for it shines of its own nature, without measure or limit, when it is not limited by anything else. Thus the light and beauty of God, which is utterly pure and free of all other things, may be called without the slightest question infinite beauty. But infinite beauty also requires immense love. Therefore I beg you, Socrates, to love all other things with a certain moderation and limit, but to love God with an infinite love, and let there be no moderation in divine love'.
>
> This is what Diotima said to Socrates". (18, *fin.*)

Well, hardly. The passage I have just quoted is in fact the end of a set of remarks that Benci, in concluding his own comments, *imagined* might have been made by Diotima to Socrates! (18, *init.*)

What I should like to do now is ask two questions, one relatively uncomplicated, the other a little more taxing. The first is: did Ficino's book prove influential in any significant way? If it did, this is certainly worth knowing, in terms of the history of Platonism if nothing else. And secondly, and more importantly, what can be made of Ficino's contribution, if any, to our understanding of Plato in general and the *Symposium* in particular?

That Ficino's book proved popular, especially among the *literati* and court circles of Europe, is beyond question. In Italy, books on love had been around, and eagerly read, since the thirteenth century, and among a constellation of great authors on the topic we find Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio, and in Ficino's own day, Pico and his nephew Gianfrancesco della Mirandola. It also helped that Ficino's patron, Lorenzo de' Medici, greatly admired the book, and used it for his commentary on his own love poetry.

In subsequent years, the work greatly influenced two major writers on the subject, Leo Hebreo, with his *Dialoghi d'Amore*, and, perhaps better known to us, Baldassare Castiglione, with his book *Il Cortigiano*, the impressively numerous editions and translations of whose works won an audience for Ficino throughout, and far beyond his native Italy.

France fell for the *De Amore* in a very big way, with major translations in 1542 and 1578; among a galaxy of writers influenced by the book were DuBellay and Ronsard. The 16th century was also, in France, something of a golden age for the production of editions of various works of Plato – over a hundred in all.

The Spaniards knew of the book and its contents mainly through Leo and Castiglione, but we also know that among the significant literary figures who read it directly were the playwright Lope de Vega and the poet Fray Luis de Leon.

In England things were rather different. The sixteenth century saw not a single edition of Plato there till 1578, and if the *De Amore* was known at all, it was known only to a handful of people via Castiglione's *Il Cortigiano*, which appeared in English translation as *The Courtier* in 1561. The *De Amore* only started to reach a fair readership after 1578, when its second French translation started to be read, and in the 1590s we find both Chapman and Spenser making use of it.

In the 17th century it finally took flight, influencing poets like Donne and Thomas and Henry Vaughan, and then a generation later the Cambridge Platonists.

But all came to a rapid end with the Enlightenment. After a brief revival spearheaded by the Cambridge Platonist Thomas Taylor, with his translation of a number of Platonists around 1804, Plato lost almost completely any philosophical respect he might have appeared to have won for himself, and he was now written off as someone who had "disgraced philosophy" with his "lofty madness" and "metaphysical pneumatics" (Henry St. John, Viscount Bolingbroke),[2] and Thomas Love Peacock probably spoke for many when one of his characters in *Crotchet Castle* said that "in our Universities Plato is held to be little more than a misleader of youth". Since then Ficino has had something of a revival in the twentieth century among a number of dedicated scholars, such as Paul Oskar Kristeller,[3] but it is probably fair to say that he is no longer a name that springs immediately to

mind when most people are looking for help in their efforts to understand Plato on love.

So why am I talking about him? Well, that brings me to my second question: *did* Ficino make any contribution to our attempts to understand Plato on this matter?

We can begin, I think, by trying to achieve clarity on where we might hope to find Ficino in Ficino. His *De Amore* is structured in such a way as to be like a Platonic dialogue in that there are a number of historical figures who meet as friends to discuss a theme of more than a little philosophical interest, love, and, as in another dialogue on love, the *Phaedrus*, they spend their time talking around a book. I say "talking around", because, as we have seen, they treat directly of the *Symposium* with relative rarity; it is only the Diotima passage that gets serious attention, and even then it comes nowhere close to being a comprehensive attempt at an *explication de texte*.

There is what one might call a "Socrates figure" in the *De Amore*, and it is precisely the figure who treats of what is called "the speech of Socrates", which turns out to be in fact largely the speech of Diotima. And it is certainly tempting to say that here, if anywhere, we are likely to find the considered views of Ficino on love, through the medium of Tomasso Benci's interpretation of what Diotima says, in the way that it has proved irresistibly tempting, till relatively recently, for interpreters of Plato to see the *Socrates* figure in Plato's dialogues as in fact the *porte-parole* for Plato.

If this were the case, it would be relatively easy to make the next move, and simply set out what appear to be the pros and cons of Benci's reading of Diotima. But I also suspect it would be too easy. I am myself inclined to believe that Plato is to be found, if he is to be found anywhere, in what one might call the "drift" of a given dialogue, where "Plato" constitutes the totality of a dialectic which is admittedly *dominated* by Socrates as its finest exemplar but in which, in the final analysis, Plato is even more deeply committed to the *process* of going where the give-and-take of argument appears to lead than to the person of any one interlocutor, however intelligent or however virtuous.

In this sense Plato is everywhere in the dialogues, even if he is pre-eminently in the persona of Socrates, and Ficino is everywhere in the *De Amore*, even if he is pre-eminently in the persona of *his* Socrates-

figure, Benci. If we fix our attention on the drift of the discussion, we find Ficino using Plotinus, Proclus, Pseudo-Denis (for him, "Dionysius the Areopagite"), and the author of the *Liber de Causis* as major sources for his interpretation of Plato, along with Aristotle, Chalcidius, and Aquinas. There is no sense in his text that some of the things they say are not easily reconcilable with one another, let alone with Plato's own text. All seem to be grist to his mill, whichever of his five speakers is talking. Among a number of examples, one might pick out his comments on love. His Proclean self talks at length of the descent of soul as a spark of that Light which is the One, and of its return, all by a natural process to which there is no exception, to that source when kindled, as it were, by the experience of earthly love (6.10). His Plotinian self talks elsewhere (2.7), in line with the *Phaedrus*, of soul's fall from heaven into a body, and of our freedom to *choose*, here and now, between heavenly and earthly love. And elsewhere still his Aquinian self talks of "in this life loving God in all things so that in the next we may love all things in God" (6.19).

I should add here, however, that the case for Ficinian syncretism could be made simply in terms of Benci's discourse, and to this I now turn. As we have already noticed *en passant*, the allegorical interpretation of the Poros/Penia episode in Diotima's speech is taken directly from Plotinus, *Enn.* 3.5.2–10 and 5.8.13, while his account of the various *daemones*, such as the "Venerean *daemon*", as agents of the planets is pure Proclus (*Elements of Theology*, propositions 40 and 44), possibly via Pletho. The long account of the various hypostases and of the soul's return to the One is drawn from both the *Elements of Theology* (propositions 20, 189) *and* the *Enneads* (5.8.1–5). His understanding of Plato's lesser gods as angels he is happy to find also in Pseudo-Denis, whom he names (6.3, *fin.*). His comment on the inability of human love to exist without the coexistence of hate (a topic Diotima never mentions) may well have come from his reading of Aquinas (*ST.* 1–2, *Q.* 29. 2, 3). And his talk of the gifts given to us by the *daemones* of the seven planets looks very much like a conversion into Proclean language of what the same Aquinas had called the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit (*ST.* 1–2, *Q.* 68, 4).

But we should move on to the content of Benci's Discourse, and more specifically to the points that touch directly on Diotima's speech, and its broader connexion with Plato's thinking on love.

Let me begin by distinguishing between what Ficino, for various reasons, appears to add to what Diotima says, and what sets out to be an explication of something specific that she does in fact say. The former includes things like his complex theory of *daemones*, the notion of an astral body and the like, but these are part of later theory, and do not impact significantly, one way or the other, on the drift of her argument, where all that matters is that Ficino is clearly in strong agreement with Diotima that Love is indeed a *daemon*.

More important, it seems to me, is to grapple with Ficino's understanding of what Diotima pretty clearly does say, and this I think raises some interesting issues. The first concerns methodology. Notoriously, till relatively recent times, commentators have paid little if any attention to the supposed importance for interpretation of the time at which Plato might have written such and such a dialogue. And Ficino would, at first glance, appear to fall squarely into that tradition. But things are less clear than that. On one occasion, as we saw, he went out of his way to assert that the *Phaedrus*, *Phaedo* and *Meno* were "early" dialogues, and, by inference, the *Republic* a somewhat later one. The assertion allowed him to claim that statements in the later dialogue, particularly statements on the Form of the Good, freed Plato from a charge of apparent inconsistency (or as he himself put it, "ambiguity" [13, *init.*]) in his thinking.

This is certainly an interesting stance, since others would have used, and do (like myself, for one) currently use, the same evidence (or putative evidence) concerning date of composition to argue to the dangers of interpreting an earlier dialogue in light of putatively later ones. For Ficino, by contrast, putative knowledge of the order of composition has the value of showing us Plato at work clarifying what is at base a unified doctrine but unlikely always to appear so without the clarification. This, one must assume, lies behind his willingness to use Chalcidius' *Commentary on the Timaeus* both to clarify, as he sees it, what Diotima says, and to expand, reasonably, as he must have thought, upon its supposed implications in the realms of theology, metaphysics, cosmology, psychology and ethics.

Comfortable with his methodology, Ficino could fairly easily, had he wished, have pointed to presumably non-early dialogues like the *Timaeus* and *Philebus* as sources for the view that transcending the world's soul is *Nous*. By the same token, if he took the *Parmenides* to

be non-early, and the *Symposium* early, he could, had he felt so inclined, have pointed to the First Hypothesis of the *Parmenides* as the source of that for him ultimate clarification, the doctrine of a One transcending even *Nous*, and he could have pointed to *Republic* Book Six and the *Timaeus* again as his source for his contention that the Demiurge, his own Supreme God, the One, and the Form of the Good (which, in the *Republic*, is to all appearances portrayed as an efficient not simply a paradigmatic cause) are one and the same. It could also reasonably account for the fact that the Form Beauty, which drives Diotima's argument, is never equated by him with the Form of the Good; his God is characterized *by* beauty, but never said at any time to *be* Beauty.

So, under questioning, Ficino might well have replied that his account of Diotima's remarks on the philosopher's drive towards Beauty did indeed go some distance beyond what she had to say, but that, in the matter of what she did say, he says nothing that Plato himself did not say by way of clarification in "later" dialogues.

At which point some reasonable debate with Ficino might begin. Let us concede, for the sake of argument, that the *Symposium* does indeed predate the *Republic*, *Timaeus* and *Philebus*, and that on occasion things mentioned in "earlier" dialogues get clarified by statements in "later" ones. The question at issue here is, does this obtain in the instances Ficino would need to make his own stance feasible?

As far as the One is concerned, the assumption that the subject of the First Hypothesis of the *Parmenides* is the supreme Transcendental Particular of neoplatonism is unconvincing, despite its august pedigree in the *Rezeptionsgeschichte*. In context, "*hen*" in the phrase "*ei hen estin*" seems pretty clearly predicative in role, the subject of the sentence being "things" (*ta onta*, 127e2) or "the universe" (*to pan*, 128a8-b1), as emerged in the discussion between Socrates and Zeno at 127e ff. And any further references to *to hen* seem clearly also to refer to "that one thing" or "that thing which is <in fact> one". Even if for the young Aristotle it finishes up in the rest of the argument serving as a fairly abstract-looking subject of logical analysis, its *origin* in the argument as Parmenides' one universe seems patent. So there are no convincing grounds for discovering here a statement that will support a doctrine of a transcendental One.

As far as *Nous* is concerned, it is certainly true that Plato's words can be read there as a reference to a *Nous* transcending the world's soul, but even if this interpretation were correct, all that it would do is confirm what the *Timaeus* appears to say, and that is, that transcending and even, apparently, fashioning in time the world's soul is a Supreme Principle which, as well as being called "the Demiurge" is also on occasion called "*Nous*". There is no word that ever suggests that this *Nous* is in any way contingent upon a further Principle for its existence, still less that this further Principle might reasonably be called God/The Supreme God.

As for Ficino's equation of God with the Form of the Good in Book Six of the *Republic*, this has going for it the fact that the Form of the Good is indeed apparently credited with efficient causality by Plato, and is said to be *epekeina tes ousias* in two important respects (*Resp*. 509b), and so possibly, despite the appellation "Form", not really a Form at all. On the other hand, however, it is also paradigmatic in status, like any other Form. When, for example, in the same dialogue, Plato talks of "the Demiurge of the senses" (*Resp*. 507c6–7) and "the Demiurge of the universe" (*Resp*. 530a6), he can be assumed to be saying that the Demiurge, like any other craftsman of things *kala*, made the senses and the cosmos according to a paradigm of goodness other than and distinct from his own goodness, and this in the context of the *Republic* can only be the Form of the Good.

But Ficino would nonetheless have had a right, it seems to me, to say that, if his equating of God with the Form of the Good was wrong, then the *Republic* itself was greatly misleading, in that in the compass of a single dialogue it appears to state that the world has two distinct and differing efficient causes, a Demiurge and the Form of the Good. Sooner or later, one might have hoped that this point would get clarified, and it seems to me it does, in the *Timaeus*, though not in the way that Ficino might have hoped or expected, given his certainty that a clarification will never contradict. Because in the *Timaeus* the notion of a Form of the Good appears to have been abandoned; there is now only *one* efficient cause of the universe; and *all* of the forms (including one must assume a Form "Goodness") are now clarified as being purely paradigmatic in status.

Which brings us finally to the Form that particularly interests Diotima, the Form "Beauty". Here, as we have noticed, Ficino is care-

ful to distinguish it from the Form of the Good, which many commentators have not. But unfortunately he has fallen for the notion that, like any other Form, it is an idea in the mind of God (a notion he sometimes expresses as a spark flashing from the Light which is God). In so thinking he was of course part of a time-honoured tradition of interpretation, but there is nothing that I myself know of in Plato's writings that leads me to think such an interpretation plausible.

Pulling all this together, I would suggest that Ficino's work is worth perusal, not least because it proved so influential for a couple of centuries after its composition. It clearly needs to be read with caution, however, since its fairly *in*cautious acceptance by many as Platonic theory seems to have played a fair part in the overall rejection of what was taken to be Plato at the time of the Enlightenment. With that proviso, it can I think still be read with profit and pleasure as a work of art on the themes of the *Symposium*. And that may well be the abiding impression it leaves – that of being a work of art – when all else has faded from consciousness. What Ficino has done, particularly in much that he says about Diotima, is produce in effect a poem for a poem, a work of art for a work of art, and it takes little effort to appreciate how it became an object of inspiration for so many of Europe's poets in the two centuries subsequent to its publication. Whatever one's views on it as a piece of interpretation, this will always remain the case. And of how many books about Plato can *that* be said?

Notes

1 I have used, with only the occasional small change, the translation of the *De Amore* to be found in *Commentary on Plato's Symposium on Love, by Marsilio Ficino*, tr. Sears Jane, Second edition 1985 (Dallas, TX: Spring Publications). I have also greatly benefited from the commentary that goes with the translation, and draw gratefully upon it for the detail of the descriptive section of this paper.

2 In his *Epistles to Pope* (*Works*, ed. D. Mallet [London, 1777], 2. 443, 535 and 4. 52, 95.

3 His major publication on Ficino is *The Philosophy of Marsilio Ficino* (translated from Kristeller's original German manuscript by Virginia Conant, New York 1943).

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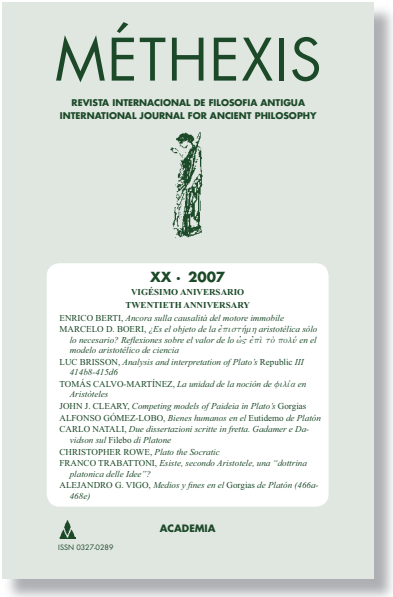
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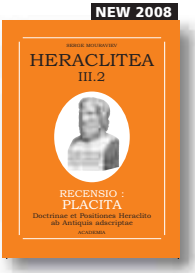

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The apparatuses of book B/ii deal with the linguistic and supralinguistic (poetic) form of the fragments edited in book B/i. Apparatus IV lists or describes such elements of the Heraclitean language as its dialect, its syntax, its uses (articles, ellipses...), while Apparatus V exhibits the poetic configurations of the various levels of discourse (from the hypophonic [prosodic] level to the semantic level, including the phonic structures [chimes] and the taxic structures [parallelisms, chiasmuses...]). Numerous figures and diagrams are added to illustrate and complement the apparatuses. Book B/ii contains in addition the text of a paper intitled „Pré-texte philosophique ou Pré-philosophie poétique. Le cas Héraclite" (Lille, 1998)

III.3.B/iii · Les textes pertinents. (iii) Notes critiques

2006. 248 pp. 44,00 EUR. Hardcover. 15,8 cm x 21,5 cm. ISBN: 3-89665-370-9

Book B/iii consists of the minimal critical notes necessary to justify (or question) the authenticity of the fragments and defend the readings adopted in book B/i and appeals for that purpose to the data contained in the apparatuses of books B/i and B/ii. This book offers a rich bibliography, a full glossary of Heraclitus' vocabulary, an alphabetical index of all the passages referred to in Apparatus I and in the Annex, and a numeric concordance with the texts of the sources published in Traditio (A).

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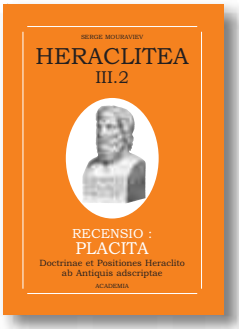

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III.2 – Recensio: Placita. Doctrinae et Positiones Heraclito ab Antiquis adscriptae. Edited by Serge Mouraviev. 2008. 254 S. 44,00 EUR. 978-3-89665-439-7.

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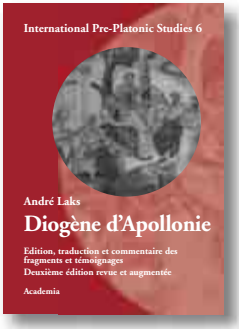

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For this edition the bibliography has been extensively updated. Furthermore, there are now three additional sections in the Introduction: Diagrams, Style, and Allegory.

... This second edition, no doubt, will serve for many years to come as a crucial research tool for scholars interested in Anaxagoras. The reader will profit greatly from consideration of Sider's erudite insights on a host of philological issues. (John E. Sisko, Bryn Mawr Classical Review)

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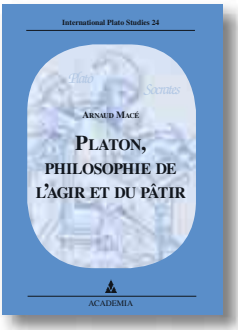

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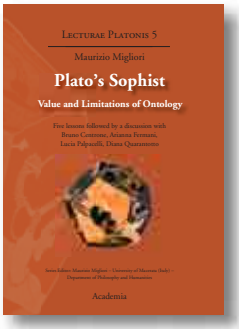

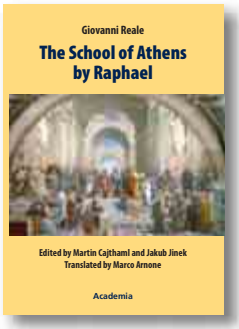
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The School of Athens by Raphael
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Lecturae Platonis

Migliori, Maurizio. **Plato's Sophist.** Value and Limitation on Ontology. 207 S. 38,00 EUR. Hc. 978-3-89665-195-2.

In the *Sophist* it is possible to find many Platonic suggestions, for instance the complexity of the diairetic procedure, the „overreaching and fulfilling" of Parmenides' positions, and above all, the foremost problem: the defining framework of reality. That is established not by ontology but by a theoretical move revolving around the concepts of whole and part, and around the connection-distinction between one, whole and all, before coming to a head in the „doing-suffering" pair.

Collegium Politicum

The Ascent to the Good. Edited by Franciso L. Lisi. 272 S. 39,50 EUR. Hc. 978-3-89665-426-7.

The defense of the philosophical government in Plato's Republic reveals the necessity of distinguishing true philosophers from false ones. This issue leads to the central question of the Good, the principle that constitutes the foundation of philosophical knowledge and of political activity. Once this principle has been introduced, the subsequent question turns on the education of the philosophers, which occupies Book VII.

The present volume contains contributions to the main issues developed in Books V-VII of the Republic, on which the attention of scholarship in the past 100 years has focused, practical philosophy, metaphysics, dialectics, and the question of the Good.

Studies in Ancient Philosophy

Vegetti, Mario. **Dialoghi con gli antichi.** A cura di Silvia Gastaldi, Francesca Calabi, Silvia Campese, Franco Ferrari. 348 S. 46,00 EUR. Hc. 978-3-89665-394-9.

The essays here collected show Vegetti's research work in different fields of History of Ancient Thought such as: Ethics, Politics, Anthropology, History of Medicine and Science, and Philosophical Historiography.

Masi, Francesca. **Epicuro e la filosofia della mente.** Il xxv libro dell'opera Sulla Natura. 284 S. 48,50 EUR. Hc. 978-3-89665-407-6.

This book reconstructs Epicurus' theory of mind by a systematic examination of *On nature* book 25. In this work E. openly faces the issue of the nature and of the formation of mental states.

The author shows that in the 25th book Epicurus endorses an *anti-reductionist* and *anti-deterministic* philosophy of mind that is not without theoretical tensions and that the philosopher will later try to solve these tensions by integrating his theory with the doctrine of *clinamen*.

Academia Philosophical Studies

Reale, Giovanni. **Raphael: the School of Athens.** Edited by Martin Cajthaml and Jakub Jinek. Translated by Marco Anone. 2008. 152 S. 29,50 EUR. Hc. 978-3-89665-377-2.

In his *Journey to Italy* Goethe writes that one can not look at great paintings like the *School of Athens* only as a whole, since „the pleasure derived from the first impression is incomplete; only when one has seen and studied every detail, slowly and part by part, the enjoyment is complete".

In this book Giovanni Reale aims at achieving exactly this, namely studying and describing Rafael's fresco *slowly and part by part*, with the full reproduction of the *cartone*.

Bechtle, Gerald. **Iamblichus. Aspekte seiner Philosophie und Wissenschaftskonzeption.** Studien zum späteren Platonismus. 182 S. 24,50 EUR. 3-89665-390-3.

International Aristotle Studies

Botter, Barbara. **Dio e Divino in Aristotele.** 308 S. 48,50 EUR. Hc. 3-89665-337-7.

This book intends to examine the Aristotelian theology as it is manifested within *Corpus aristotelicum* and in the third book of *De Philosophia*. The contemporary presence and even the superimposition of theologies of diverse origins is rendered possible, for Aristotle, by the use of the term „god" not as a proper noun but as an attribute, having the function of indicating a degree of excellence in a systematic scale of beings.

This statement is legitimised by two exegetic hypotheses named by the author „principle of *malista*" and „attributive function of the term god", which justify the use of the terms *theos* and *theion* as an apposition and an attribute. *Theos* is not, for Aristotle, the highest subject of a theological investigation, but the necessary term to individualize and characterize a degree of excellence.

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